

# discontents



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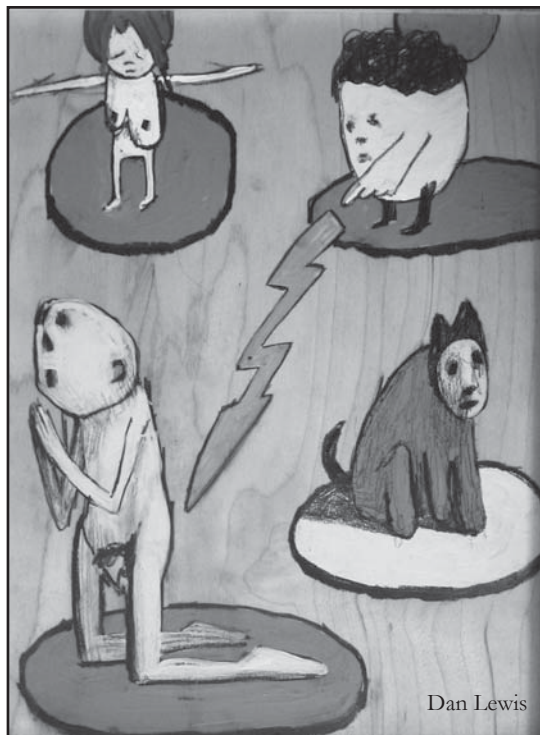
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# Inside *Anarchy*

Anyone who reads the letters section of this magazine will note that there is a controversy sizzling. We had, apparently, a bomb in that section in our last issue, with a sparkly fuse of indeterminate length. Who knows how many explosions will follow, and which will be the most significant? Check out this letters section to find out more.

It could be considered coincidental to the afore-mentioned controversy that this issue's theme is games and play (since some regular contributors printed herein are notoriously rough players), but let us leave that thought where it lies.

The topic of games and play is significant at least partly because any resistance that is to be sustained must have some measure of pleasure associated with it. The more one is determined to live every day mindfully and fully, the more crucial pleasure becomes to one's pursuits. The interaction between having long-term, difficult-to-attain (one *could* say stunningly unlikely) goals, and the desire for a beautiful life full of spontaneity and joy, requires some creative thinking – and play (with its corollary, humor) is an essential voice in the negotiation. This magazine has always taken desire seriously, so this latest theme takes on another piece of that puzzle.

We introduce three new authors with this issue, G. Ogo and Drica Dejerck in a collaboration on Soma, and Alejandro de Acosta with some (meta)physical thoughts on play. Simurgh, gamer and author of a piece on the genesis of Debord's *Kriegspiel*, is a long-term, much-appreciated contributor with more pen names than God.

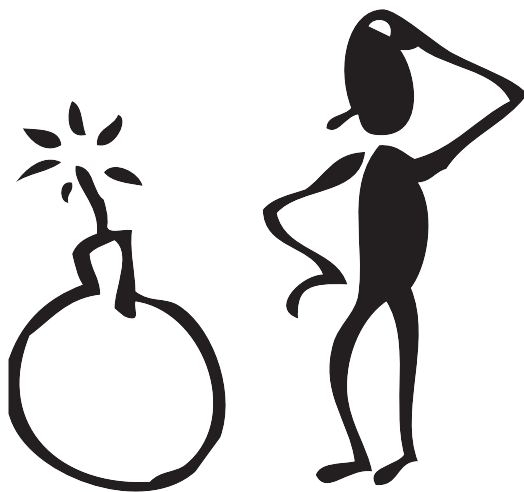
In columns, God is the entry for this issue's Egoist Encyclopedia; Liana Doctrine discusses the pitfalls of overvaluing independence; Aragorn! explores the connection between a friendly game of Settlers of Catan at a co-worker's house and guns and grenades in the streets, and we present Anarchy Eights, a hysterically complicated revision of the card game Crazy Eights.

Besides the book and media reviews by our usual suspects, we also have another of our rare movie reviews, this time Russkiy Bunt (The Captain's Daughter), which (despite the English title) is faithfully based on Pushkin's history of the Pugachev Rebellion.

And last but not least, our editorial for this issue is mainly a response to the current controversy, but it is also the latest in a continuing (sometimes indirect) discussion about critique, and critique's appropriate place in any milieu that wants to make (or allow for) a better world. This magazine and its contributors get lots of negative feedback for the tone and content of our reviews, and while that absolutely comes with the territory of being a public project, especially one in the anarchist scene

– and more especially one that takes a more cynical view of many of the easy answers that people find comforting – we do hope that our critics recognize the respect and care that is implicit in, built into, the attention that we pay to all of the myriad anarchist projects that we review.

So, have fun with this issue. Remember we're always interested in anarchist writers and artists who want to contribute to these pages, including people who'd like to write a Bad Medicine column.



# From C.A.L. Press

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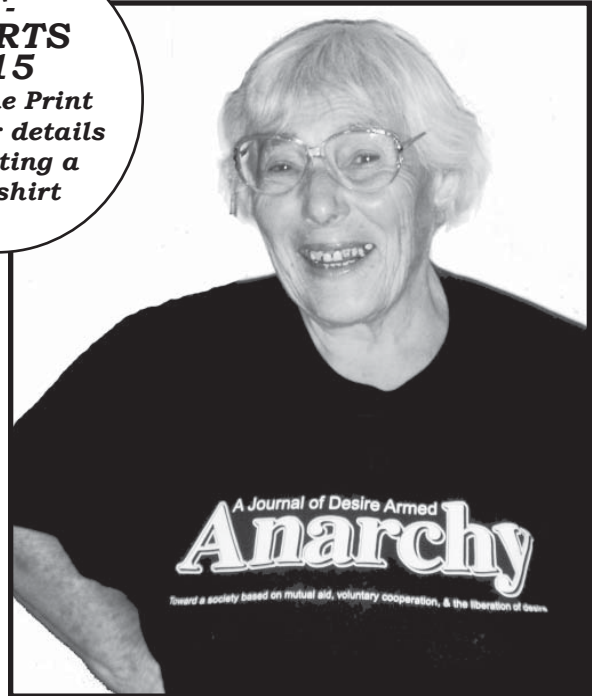
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## RIP Roberto Freire

*Love, not life, is the opposite of death.*

Roberto Freire died in São Paulo, Brazil, on May 23, 2008, at the age of 81. He lived passionately and made this passion for life the central demand in his struggle against alienating and oppressive societies. He often said that everything he did – his novels, plays, activism, Soma (see page 43) – was to promote anarchy. He remains as example of an anarchist who knew like no one else how to touch people personally when spreading the flame of rebellion.

Good Bye, Roberto. Thanks for being awesome and crazy.

Long Live Anarchy!



*car someone spray painted, "Welcome to Evergreen! (A)." Soon it became clear that a few police officers would not be able to subdue the crowd, so riot squads were quickly mobilized. Students were shot at with pepper spray and rubber bullets before finally dispersing.*

From *To The Restless #2*

In the recent months I have heard rumors, some true while some are a bit far off, that the Northwest anarchists have their shit together. That we are "actually doing shit." Sometimes I can't help but feel that that is what it is: shit. Sometimes people allow their head to expand a bit, even sometimes anarchists attack fellow comrades over the silliest things as if they have all the answers as to how to "create real change" and that the "stupid anarchists" are just hot headed or adhere to some doctrine called "the politics of fun." But I grin a bit, maybe in an awkward way sometimes. Like during the times when I have heard excitedly "We have been on Bombs and Shields two times in the last six months!" from fellow anarchists, from people who seem to think they are in a movie. Hearing from friends about people from other parts of the country asking about the mysterious I.A.C. (International Anarchist Conspiracy) witches and wizards. These things, though often times exciting, very well may work against us. We will have lost if we allow ourselves to become part of this spectacle. Something to be watched and not taken part in, remaining mere observers of rebellion.

The resistance to this country's war in the form of road blockades, lock downs and attacks on banks in the Northwest made national news. The battles at the Port of Olympia still resonate amongst many living here today. But the only intention the capitalist press had in showing those images to the rest of the country was to sensationalize them, as attacks against the police and against property. To paint them as protests gone wrong, riots in their words. And most importantly to make it understood that these things cannot happen everywhere – that these are only secluded events, things that are not regular occurrences and things that definitely are not spreading in popularity, that this activity is centered in a specific area or region. The last thing we need is to be deemed the new Eugene. Do we all remember what that was like? Sixty Minutes with the dreaded Eugene anarchists. Controversy and debate on the television screen. To become part of the spectacle is to take part in digging our own graves. And those who allow the Northwest to become part of this spectacle – by acting as spectators do – are also inevitably taking part in this charade. *They* do not want this energy to spread, and by only watching and not acting you will be condemning any people resisting with all their hearts, in the Northwest as well as internationally, to the most severe state repression imaginable. Because when resistance has a center all that is needed to be done is to aim there, and that will be that. I have heard excuses before when speaking about the V-Day Rebellion (the Dead Prez riot on valentines day), hearing a very well-known anarchist say that "of course a cop car was flipped at Evergreen college". Then it being said that "No, the people who were involved were not predominantly students at the college. These things don't usually happen you know." "Well

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## Observers to the Fires

*Following a Dead Prez concert in February 2008, a campus police officer at Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington took a student into custody for allegedly fighting with another student. After a few students began yelling to call attention to the police misconduct, a crowd of 200 (according to corporate press) surrounded the officer's patrol car which contained the student and officer. The crowd began chanting, "Let him go!" and refused to allow the patrol car to move. Terrified by the students, the officer let the arrestee go and called for back up. Upon arrival, the reinforcements rushed the officer out of the crowd, leaving behind multiple patrol cars. Windows were smashed out of the cars, then looted, and spray painted. One police car was flipped over and completely totaled. On a wall behind the flipped*



they were Dead Prez fans, anyhow” was the response. Let’s drown ourselves in our excuses, shall we? If we sit and think hard and long enough about all the reasons that we should not act I am positive that we could ensure that we will never be an effective threat whatsoever. I am tired of excuses, I am tired of inaction and obsessive theorizing. Especially when coming from those who claim to be tired of this nonsense as well. We need energy and we need passion. It fills us with life, with everything this society tries to rob from us with its distractions and its subtle comforts. And by playing into this game of “it works there, but it won’t work here” we will continue to see the same old demonstrations, the same old reformist ideologues standing on stages preaching the power of the ballot. We will see more of the same and any pockets of resistance will be crushed.

It is that which the authorities would love to see most, to see our fight become centralized, so simple to destroy, so quick to suffocate. But our power lies in our ability to act autonomously, without any direct link to those we are acting in solidarity with. I guess that this is a challenge to all anarchists then, to use their autonomy and act without orders, directions or guidelines. Revolutionary solidarity is the intertwining of one’s struggles, and then action based upon that very commonality. So

if you share our common enemy, if you share our struggle, then act with us. Act from a distance, act with us and our common goals in mind. And when you do so, know that you are not alone in this fight for

liberation. We are not alone in this war for anarchy. Because that is what this is: war. It always has been war, and as long as people believe they are entitled to a better life due to their privilege, their bank account, their possessions, their religion, their sex, their race, their blood, they will be fought against with all the fury and fire of those below them, those who reject their world. Those who reject their gods. The delinquents, the rebels, the miscreants. We will always have the last laugh.

Do not just mill around on Youtube watching the Dead Prez show turn into a riot. Watching that sheriff car flipped and looted. Yes, there is a lot of rage here right now, that is evident, but I believe that rage is elsewhere as well. It is in every one of us, a deep yearning for a free life. So show your rage, then. Let’s not act as cowards act. Let’s take the risks that need to be taken. That’s all it takes. That’s all it took to bring energy into the hearts of many strong individuals. And we still have much to learn here from the past. But we need not continually watch videos of riots in other countries, struggles for liberation in other countries, or even read historical text on the beautiful rebellions of the past to quench our thirst for anarchy. Because that fulfillment is a farce, a mirage of sorts. It will never compare to a true life of revolt, the lived experi-

ence of the free rebel. This power is in us all, and until we realize this we will be bound to a life lived as a spectator. And what good is a spectator in a world on the brink of disaster. Well, they are no better than the academic corpses or the fools who expect that hope will pull us through this mess.

We ask for revolutionary solidarity from our comrades. We ask for free thinkers with strong hearts. Laughing rebels. Let’s work together, even if from a distance, even without spoken words. We can see this world’s foundations shaking, and we can see its weaknesses. We can read each others messages as well as the words on this page right now. Our desire for a world without shackles is not a vain hope, it is not a naive dream. It is a feeling inside of us, a living breathing part of our bodies. And we will not be quenched of this thirst for freedom until every monument to the gods of capital and exploitation are toppled and made rubble of.

This is a simple request that needs only simple answers.

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## El Solitario: Old School

*The last week saw the Spanish state, its armed police, the Guardia Civil, and media establishment put away Jaime Giménez Arbe, a bank robber known as “el Solitario” after his extradition from Portugal on charges of murder (of two Guardia Civil agents). He had run rings around the Spanish authorities in a career which saw him allegedly commit over 30 armed robberies in 15 years.*

*He declared himself to be an Anarchist & addressed the court in Spanish and Arabic.*

His is a most curious case which might interest readers who wonder at the long route anarchism and anarchists have taken from the days when Emma Goldman tried to prostitute herself.

Surely *El Solitario* was representative of a bygone age.

To my knowledge only three states in Europe have produced armed crimes which were self-attributed to anarchists; Spain, Italy and Germany. Also to my knowledge all such cases included a media fuss amounting to trial by press and the deaths of armed police agents. *El Solitario* was certainly not the first person to declare himself an anarchist in court when charged with bank robbery or murder of a police agent. So did the Italian born Claudio Lavazza who is serving a sentence for the murder of a police woman during a Bank robbery in 1996. Indeed there was some confusion in the Lavazza case when the grouplet were also called "armed communist workers" but years later a group was blamed for a pipe bomb in a Lavazza-brand coffee pot outside the Italian consulate in Barcelona. It was the same week ETA tried to bomb an Irish company building an electricity plant in the Basque country and the UK saw its Summer of Terror begin.

I remember everyone had good alibis, was resolute in rejecting violence and stopped speaking Italian for a week. (cf, <http://www.indymedia.ie/article/70892>)

But *El Solitario*, as his nickname suggests, was not thought to be a member of any grouplet engaged in anti-system action or the perverse promotion of kitchenware. His 30 bank robberies won him a notoriety and sta-

tus as "Spain's most wanted bandit" because of their meticulous planning and silly disguises. Jaime Giménez Arbe was a fan of the fake moustache and plasticine nose which you can see in this compilation of CCTV images produced by the Spanish authorities for his "most wanted" Youtube vid.

As a quick look at the list of his robberies and the reporting of them will confirm he had the audacity to hit twice in the same area within 48 hours.

When he was finally arrested in Portugal on the 23rd of July 2007 in Operation Gloria, a joint concern of the Portuguese authorities with the Spanish *Guardia Civil*, it emerged that he had been preparing to go to Brazil to retire with his girlfriend. We can see in the photo how he jovially took his arrest, perhaps not aware of how intensive the following media portrayal would be.

Neighbours, school contemporaries, family members of victims, workers in banks were all wheeled out to confirm that the man was violent and surly and all they had needed was vindication of their instincts that this man was in fact a properly "bad-un."

After his extradition to Spain to face charges in a Navarre court for murder of police agents, he issued an open letter in which he describes his trades (fitter and solderer) and insists that his only intention was the professional expropriation of financial institutions as a jolly good anarchist.

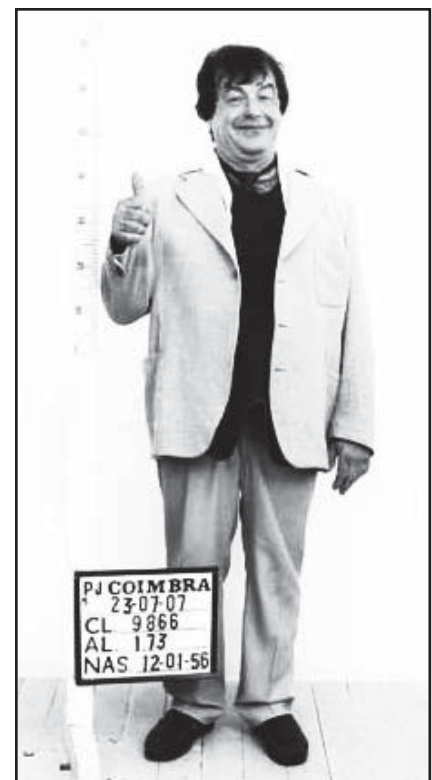
In his court hearings this last week, the mother of one of the murdered police agents attacked him and beat him around the head before being gently removed by the court officials. "Murderer!" she shouted whilst he yet again insisted "Madam, I did not shoot your son."

It would have all been done and dusted. Provincial bank clients ready to return to the more subtle robbery which excites not their indignation - that of their mortgage rates.

He had declared himself many times to be an anarchist and alledged that a Corsican terrorist had been with him in the car when the two Spanish policemen were shot. In his final speech before sentencing he switched into fluent Arabic.

At which point the TV reported solemnly that he had in his final bid for aggrandisement and notoriety and egoism turned a judicial process into a political show. Yet most interestingly the Arabic part of his harangue has not been made available to the curious either to transcribe or translate.

(Adapted from UKindymedia)



# Who is This *We*?

Review by Dot Matrix

## **A Field Guide for Female Interrogators**

by Coco Fusco  
(Seven Stories Press, 2008)  
144 pages. Paper. \$16.95

Presumably readers have already heard the stories of military women using their bodies and sexualized actions to manipulate and coerce prisoners. Catalyzed by these stories, Coco Fusco, art professor and artist, writes about the complicated relationship between women and war and the military. As background for this, Fusco researched interrogation and torture, taking a class of female students to interrogator training sessions. The book is in four parts – Invasion of Space by a Female (in the form of a letter to Virginia Woolf – icon and inspiration

of a reformist feminism); FBI Memo – a memo from an FBI agent recounting three examples of problematic behavior by interrogators; Our Feminist Future – a transcription of the author’s presentation for a symposium at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA); and the title piece – illustrated directions for effective use of women as interrogators.

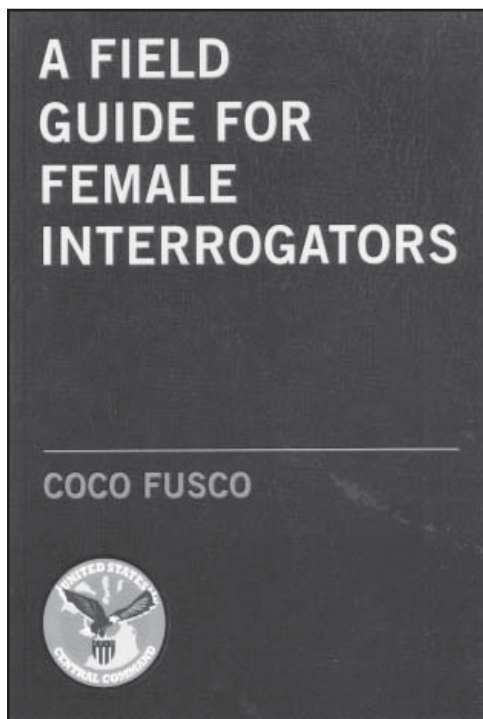
The first piece is surely relevant for some feminists but not anarchists, since anarchists have long understood the futility of merely switching the people who are in power (although given how many anarcha-feminists are long on old style feminism and short on anarchist theory, it could still be useful for someone sitting right next to you). The stories of how women have used their sexuality and had their bodies used by people over them are neither surprising nor particularly interesting except as further evidence of the need for discussions on power that go past “women are victims, men are perpetrators.”

Our Feminist Future was presented during the symposium The Feminist Future at MoMA in 2007 and is by far the strongest piece in the book. Fusco speaks in the persona of a military representative, informing the audience that the War on Terror “offers women an unprecedented opportunity to

demonstrate our strength and charm by providing us with an enemy for whom sexuality is a key weak point,” and congratulating the art world on its containment of feminism and dissent. Scathing, confrontative, and funny – from comparisons of the military and the art scene (both are hierarchical, in bed with multi-national corporations, and reliant on distracting spectacles) to points about the adoption of the military’s tactics by the art world ...

The challenge then, for political and military strategists, has been to capitalize on female ambition while at the same time severing the attraction to power from the desire for change – what I believe some of you here call the urge to dismantle patriarchy.

We had to train our recruits to embrace the golden rule that in order to be good soldiers they have to stop thinking about being women. Now it seems to me that you have all been very successful at convincing the young among you that in order to be good artists they have to stop thinking... about being women, or just about anything else. (101)

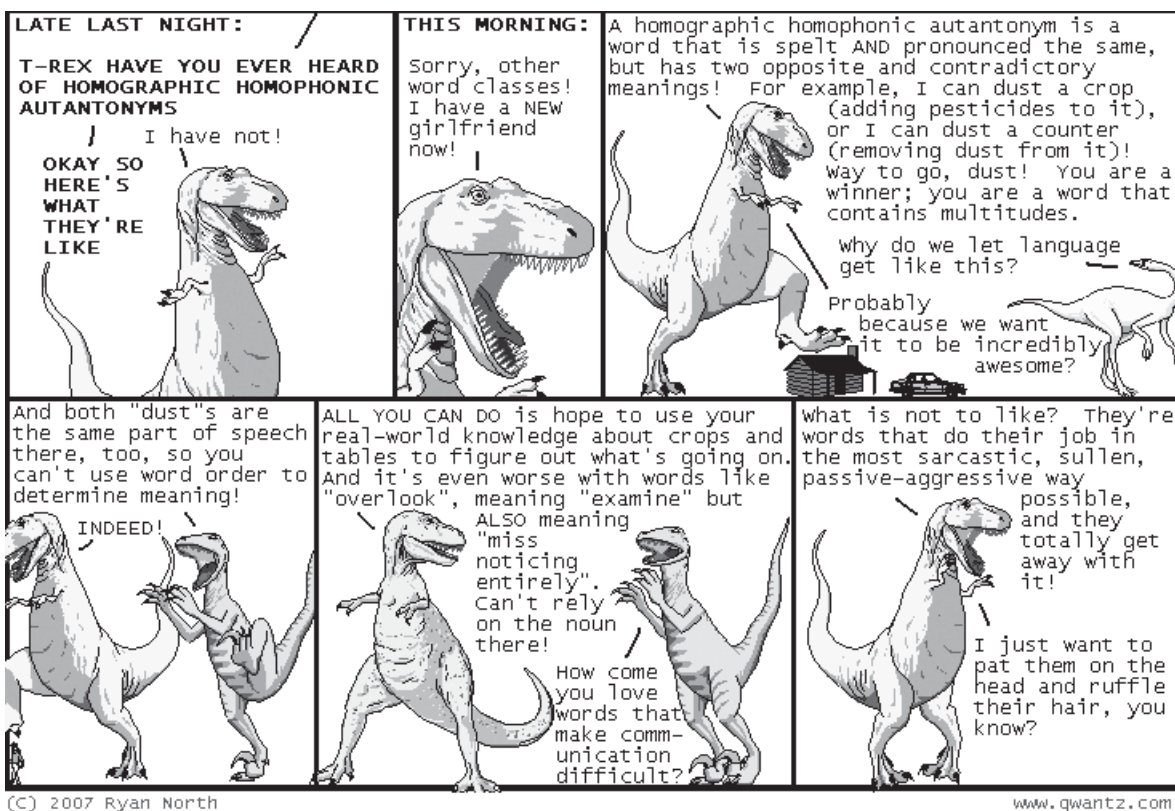


There are plenty of weak points in the book, places where the thinking just isn't that deep – like when Fusco bemoans the inadequate response to the war on Iraq and suggests that the possible reasons for this (lack of) response are sensory overload, the privilege of indifference (?), or desensitization from violent games and movies.(25) None of these reflect much analysis on why people don't act. At best she is not explaining her line of reasoning; at worst she is thoughtlessly echoing things she has read in the newspapers. The question of why people do not rise up is a huge one, and deserves more attention than she gives it. Along similar lines – as

a response to jokes in her class room about how pleasurable some of the media-covered torture looks – she wonders if the rise in the acceptance of sado-masochistic sexual practice allows for increasing confusion between consensual and non-consensual acts.(24) Again, without more background, it's hard to hear that statement as anything other than one of discomfort, from someone who is taking the easy analysis out... Issues of consent are and have always been complicated. University classes are (at their best) places for people to explore complicated material. People have always been simplistic about how they address those complications... When

the uncomfortable jokes weren't about torture, they were about rape. So what makes the current status of sado-masochism the relevant issue here?

But while there are disappointing bits in this book (including the parts that are written for the lowest common denominator of reformist feminism), and it needed to be proof-read one more time (or two), the main push of it – from the title to the art piece that anchors it – is challenging to feminist essentialism, and to the idea that women are better than men because of Victim Status. More of that, please.



# An Academic *Shines*

Review by Lawrence Jarach

**Anarchy Alive!  
Anti-Authoritarian Politics  
from Practice to Theory**

by Uri Gordon  
(Pluto Press, 2008)  
183 pages. Paper. \$26.95

An *Oxford University trained sociologist* wrote this book, a retooling of his *doctoral thesis*?! An *activist* with Indymedia, Peoples' Global Action, and Anarchists Against the Wall?! A participant-observer in current anarchist-led and/or anarchist-oriented and/or anarchist-tinged struggles?! How dare he write a book about anarchist politics that attempts to break down the barriers of the (in)famous dichotomy between theory and practice, between writers and activists? The audacity! The gall!

When I started reading the preface and acknowledgements, I was underwhelmed. He thanks various tenured academics (for whom it is now safe to write about anarchism) and activists who are not exactly the favorite authors of this writer and some of whom have come in for some heavy criticism (if not in these pages, then at least in less formal conversations). Gordon begins by recounting some heady moments at the Gleneagles anti-G-8 demonstrations as a way of introducing unfamiliar readers to the concept of participant-observer. Then on page 3 of the introduction, he lets readers know what to expect:

*Anarchy Alive!* is an anarchist book about anarchism. It...aims to demonstrate what a theory based on practice can achieve when applied to central debates and dilemmas

in the movement today... [T]he major aim is to make a contribution within anarchist theory, without having to apologise about it.

Sounds both plausible and ambitious, but can this academic participant-observer deliver the goods? After a cursory introduction, Gordon does indeed start to deliver with an examination of areas of contention between and among anarchists and others interested in social change. The questions of Violence, Power, Technology, and Nationalism are each given their own chapters, with a few excellent points raised, some common misunderstandings demolished, and a few surprises for those accustomed to reading academic liberals pretending to be anarchists.

Not content to leave the question of violence to the pacifists and hand-wringing moralists, Gordon (re-) introduces the issue of power (both as personal/group capacity and as the ability to exert compulsion or coercion on others) into the discourse—despite each topic getting its own chapter, there are clearly overlaps. His style throughout the book is densely informative, and therefore worth quoting at length. Eventually, after some preliminary discussion of definitions of coercion and capacity, the idea of enforcement looms large and central.

Enforcement is coercion that follows formal procedures and guidelines... the means and protocols for enforcement are constantly available to the enforcer. The coercer, on the other hand, may have

to 'invent' their own means and strategy for coercion.

...[W]hereas diffuse social sanctions are indeed coercive, they are hardly something on which an edifice of *enforcement* could be built... And aside from social sanctions, the available sanctions that can be exercised in a networked social movement are next to nil.... [t]he lack of appropriate sanctions, then, makes enforcement not only undesirable for anarchists in their politics, but structurally impossible...

I am not asking whether this absolute non-enforcement can or cannot work in an anarchist *society* and apply to all areas of life... [D]ecentralisation and autonomy are not just values but also facts on the ground. They are there because [of] the impossibility of rationalised, permanent enforcement... (67-9, italics in original)

And in the very next paragraph, he even manages to sneak in (well it's not really that sneaky, but it was a bit unexpected nonetheless) a dig at the obnoxiously persistent topic of democracy as it relates—or more accurately, *doesn't*—to anarchist practice. Most anarchist critics of democracy take issue with representation, or majority rule, and try to force democratic processes into a more familiar anarchist framework—using the strange and internally contradictory term “direct democracy” as if

that somehow alters the tensions between *no rule* and *majority rule*. Gordon, however, due to his examination of enforcement, scrutinizes a more interesting theoretical objection to anarcho-democracy.

Once we shift our understanding...we are able to shift the mistake that most clouds our thinking over process – the continued couching of the debate in the language of democracy... Democratic discourse assumes without exception that the political process results, at some point, in collectively binding decisions... Binding means enforceable and enforceability is a background assumption of democracy. But the outcomes of anarchist process are inherently impossible to enforce. That is why the process is not 'democratic' at all, since in democracy the point of equal participation in determining decisions is that this is what legitimates these decisions' subsequent enforcement – or simply sweetens the pill. Anarchism, then, represents not the most radical form of democracy, but an altogether different paradigm of collective action. (69-70)

The issue of accountability as it relates to non-affinity group decision making takes another unexpected turn. In discussing the difference of location between a more formal and public venue (what he calls the Plenary) and a truly informal, even secretive, location (what he dubs the Campfire), Gordon declares that decision-making

in the Plenary requires precisely those resources which are most difficult to share

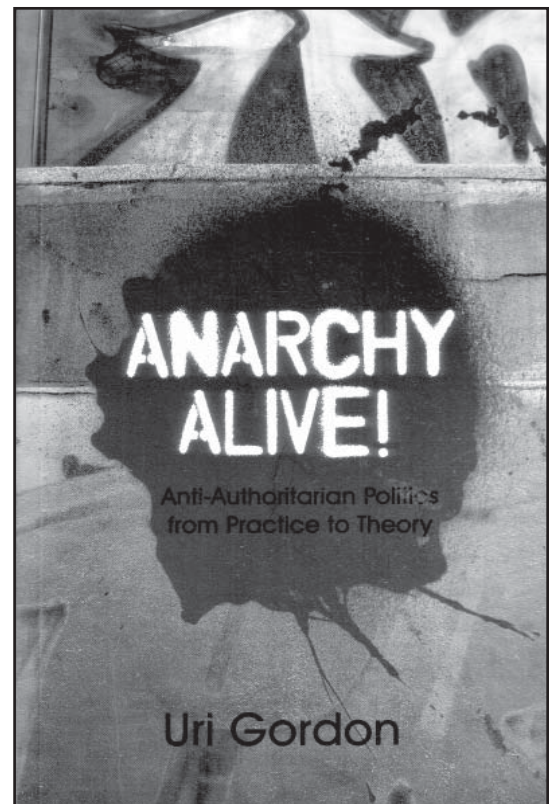
– public confidence, articulation and charisma. Not only that, often these resources only become ones that generate inequality in such formal and assembly venues of decision-making. Because it is so difficult to share this resource, and because its current distribution strongly reflects patterns of domination in society, the only way to equalise the access to the influence it generates is *to minimise its relevance as a resource*...

While anarchist networks may well be a supportive environment for self-deprogramming and empowerment, as matters stand it is unfair to say to a woman 'you have to get self-confidence' as a condition for participation. Why does she have to make a special effort to change in order to participate on equal footing just because she is a woman in a patriarchal society? At the same time, privileging the Plenary erases and delegitimises the manifold forms of using power that women have developed in response to patriarchy, and the ways in which many people find it most comfortable to empower themselves. As a result of these considerations, I think anarchists are bound to acknowledge that this invisible, subterranean, indeed *unaccountable* use of power is not only inevitable in some measure (because of habit and secrecy), but also needs to be embraced, since it coheres with their worldview in important respects.

The quest for accountability, then, arrives at a

dead end... any modification to how people reflect upon and wield power in anarchist organising would have to be viewed not as a restriction on freedom, but as its expression. Rather than discouraging empowerment in informal venues, it would make people more encouraged and excited to create, initiate and do – only perhaps in a different way. Precisely because the entire edifice of anarchist organising is built on pure voluntarism, any change would have to be actively desired rather than seen as a concession.

For these reasons, I would suggest that the only way to resolve this particular set of anarchist anxieties would be through a culture of solidarity around the invisible wielding of power... inasmuch as solidarity modifies behaviour it does so as a positive motivation, not as a limiting duty...



People can initiate change in their own organisational practices, taking initiative to create habits of resource-sharing and of reflective and considerate use of informal power, displaying that agenda and hopefully inspiring others to follow suit. If these practices catch on, then resource-sharing and solidarity will have become something that people keep in mind by default. Such a resolution is clearly partial and imperfect, but at least it is something that can actually happen, unlike a 180-degree turn away from informal organising that extinguishes the Campfire of initiative. (75-77, italics in original)

His discussion of violence/non-violence is just as subtle and meaningful. Rather than keeping it on the level of rhetoric and cursing, Gordon introduces another axis of meaning: justified/unjustified. Now we're getting somewhere, and that somewhere is intellectual honesty and reflection rather than quick denunciation and attempts at marginalization from supposed allies. Another important topic that Gordon isn't shy about is the place of revenge as a motivating factor in justifying violence. This is good stuff, even if it takes place over the space of only three and a half pages.

Aside from the old (but constant) question of what is labeled violence, Gordon devotes a chapter to one of the other most vexing issues among contemporary anarchists—what he calls “a curious ambivalence” (109) toward technology. Avoiding the usual critics of technology cited by most primitivists (Mumford and Ellul, perhaps Heidegger and Marcuse), Gordon goes directly to contemporary non-anarchist academics, those whose entire careers are devoted to the topic. On

that basis, Gordon assures readers that the “neutrality [of technology] thesis has been rejected,” (115) because “modern society has come to depend materially on the pervasive stability of large-scale infrastructures.” The deployment of particular technologies creates “technical arrangements that determine social results in a way that logically and temporally precedes their actual use. There are predictable social consequences to deploying a given technology or set of technologies” (117). For anyone with even a passing sympathy for the green/primitivist/anti-civilization discourse, this is mundane, almost self-evident. But that's not good enough for Gordon the engaged critic and activist; and given the unquestioning adherence of many anti-primitivist/anti-green anarchists to the dominant technology-as-neutral discourse, it bears repeating. On a practical level, discussing the relevance of particular technologies and their appropriateness in an anarchist (or merely anarchist-friendly) society or even a small community, is inevitable—but, again, is strangely absent in almost all anti-primitivist discussions. Gordon says with confidence that

communities will truly be able to judge whether [technologies] are appropriate on conditions such as sustainability, non-specialism, and a human scale of operation and maintenance that encourages creativity, conviviality and cooperation. (138)

Sadly, nothing this profound—despite its shortness—appears in any of the anti-primitivist literature; if there were anything comparable, it would be easier to consider their arguments as something other than sectarian sniping. Gordon also asks the one major question about industrial technology that needs to be addressed and tackled by all anarchists and others interested in

fundamental social change:

at least some measure of technological abolitionism must be brought into the horizon of anarchist politics. How extensive a technological roll-back is envisioned is beside the point: the relevant question from an anarchist perspective is not where to stop, but where to *start*. (128, italics in original)

For those who insist that technology is nothing more than the use of tools, Gordon has his own response (although it does not originate with him). Differentiating between the pervasive human curiosity about our environments and how to alter things in them for our personal and communal advantage on the one hand, and the apparently insatiable drive of elites in class-based cultures to dominate and destroy, Gordon separates technique from its culturally specific (in this case, the culture of hierarchy, specialization, and domination) rationalizations, marking him as anything but a mindless neo-Luddite.

The value of this capacity, through which human beings acquire a sense of ability and mastery..., is very hard to challenge. The issue here, however, is that the [European] cultural ideal of technology, as it increasingly monopolises fascination with human creative power, does so while seamlessly appropriating it into a humanist Enlightenment narrative of progress. What is actually the source of fascination is *technique*... But technology as a cultural ideal obscures this source, just as technique is materially sublimated into a *social project of rationalised*

*surplus- and capacity-build-ing*. It is the impulse to extract technique from its sublimation in progress, and to valorise it as an experience rather than as a basis for the ‘positive’ aspect of an anarchist politics of technology... [I]t is certainly possible to realise inventive/creative capabilities in a decentralised, liberatory and sustainable way. This is because there are at least some ways of intervention in the material world which anarchists *would* want to promote. (136, italics in original)

The last area of examination is the question of nationalism, and Gordon is uniquely placed (both as an anarchist and as an Israeli) to discuss it within the context of an ongoing and bloodily contentious struggle. Readers who expect an analysis consistent with his subtle and profound looks at the previous topics will not be disappointed. Taking issue with the simplistic condemnation of any kind of Palestinian opposition to Israeli oppression as nationalist state-building, Gordon dives into the sticky subject with his typical finesse, dismissing the “pox on both your houses” stance of many anarchists outside the region by focusing on the actions of individual Israeli anarchists and the groups they’re in, along with their strategy of joint struggle unmediated by official or institutional channels.

The everyday acts of resistance that anarchists join and defend in Palestine – e.g. removing roadblocks or defending olive harvesters from attacks by Jewish settlers – are immediate steps to help preserve people’s livelihoods and dignity, not a step toward statehood... Israelis taking direct action alongside Pal-

estinians is a strong public message in itself... Israelis who demonstrate hand-in-hand with Palestinians are threatening because they are afraid neither of Arabs or the Second Holocaust that they are supposedly destined to perpetrate... And this is threatening on a deeper level than any hole in the [separation] fence – but then again, anarchists didn’t get their reputation as trouble-makers for nothing. (156-7)

...the relevant point is that unlike coexistence and dialogue for the sake of it, joint struggle does not imply normalisation. This is because it is clearly infused with antagonism towards the commanding logic of both the Israeli state, and the Palestinian parties and militias who condemn any dealings with Israelis. So while the creation and fostering of spaces which facilitate mutual aid between Palestinians and Israelis is indeed required, only such spaces which are ones of rebellion and struggle can honestly stand up to the charge of false normalisation and ‘coexistence’... Israeli-Palestinian cooperation in militant but non-violent action is inherently powerful because it enacts a dramatic, 90-degree flip of perspective: the ‘horizontal’ imagery of conflict between Israelis and Palestinians is displaced by the ‘vertical’ one of struggle between people and government. (161)

Ultimately though, for all his promotions of some actual practices that he finds consistent with his vision

of anarchy, Gordon is not a dogmatist. All of his practical suggestions are just that—suggestions. Shunning blueprints, he finishes with the open-ended stance of a critic instead of the certainties of a bureaucrat:

And so once again there are more questions than answers. (164)

Written like a true anarchist.

“Precisely because the entire edifice of anarchist organising is built on pure voluntarism, any change would have to be actively desired rather than seen as a concession.”

# Who Speaks the Language of *Revolution?*

Review by Aragorn!

## **Constituent Imagination**

eds. Stephen Shukaitis &  
David Graeber with Erika Biddle  
(AK Press 2008)  
336 pages. Paper. \$21.95

This is an eclectic book. While the central question lies in the neighborhood of how to reconcile activism with academia, there are plenty of plot points that are off the mean. DIY Punk Rock, anti-racism, crocheting, tree-sits, and anti-globalization tourism mingle with writings on real subsumption, praxis, ethnography, and the multitude.

*Consistent Imagination* is organized into four stanzas that comprise the editors' view of the relationship between radical theory and the "movement of movements" of social change, each with an editorial introduction. The first is titled Moments of Possibility//Genealogy of Resistance and attempts to address the central question of this book: how does one negotiate between the desire for and practice of a total rupture of the existing order while working to understand the existing order? In the parlance of the book, "Where are the fault lines between academia, activism, and the orgasms of history?"

Of the five articles within this section, the article by *Colectivo Situaciones* ("Something more on Research Militancy") is the most important both to the first section and to the book's central thesis.

In an era when communication is the indisputable maxim, in which everything is justifiable by its communicable usefulness, research militancy refers to experimentation: not to thoughts, but to the power to think; not to the circumstances, but to the possibility of experience; not to this or that concept, but to experiences in which such notions acquire power (*potencia*); not to identities but to a different becoming; in one word: intensity does not lie so much in that which is produced (that which is communicable) as in the process of production itself (that which is lost in communication). (81)

*Colectivo Situaciones* is an Argentine group originating in the radical student milieu of the mid-1990s that, since then, has produced books on unemployed workers' movements, the question of power and tactics of struggle, and conversations about how to think about revolution today. In their own words "[We] intend to offer an internal reading of struggles, a phenomenology (a genealogy), not an 'objective' description. It is only in this way that thought assumes a creative, affirmative function, and stops being a mere reproduction of

the present. And only in this fidelity with the immanence of thought is it a real, dynamic contribution, which is totally contrary to a project or scheme that pigeonholes and overwhelms practice" (*Perspectives on Anarchist Theory*, fall, 2003).

Immanence is a concept that has gained a kind of trendy traction among anarchists who are inspired by the political writings of Deleuze, along with the Negri-ists of the Autonomous Marxist tendency. The idea is rather simple: instead of seeing history as a series of progressive changes leading to an idealized future (as in dialectics), immanence sees no transcendent future. Life is to be lived now, not after the revolution, and not in the service of the historical active agent.

Here we see the great potential of post-structuralist and autonomist ideas for current anarchist thought. Immanence provides a conceptual framework as powerful (if not as historically rich) as dialectics – for understanding our participation in this historical moment – and frames the conversation on an appropriate scale. We are no longer for Great Men and the inevitability of History. As Deleuze puts it in his reading of Nietzsche (quoted in Will Weikart, "All Gods, All Masters: Immanence and Anarchy/Ontology" <http://info.interactivist.net/node/5453>),

“Choose those things which you would have continuing forever, and embrace them with your life. As a principle, this approach avoids the direct negativity of opposition; and as such it allows for a very positive affirmation of the world.”

The second section of the book, *Circuits of Struggle*, sets up a series of metaphors about human energy and activism like ten-penny nails and pounds away at them like a technophilic carpenter building a casket for John Zerzan. As a matter of fact, this section is haunted by Zerzan, with its defensive rhetoric about circuits, “turning cycles of struggles into spirals and opening up new planes of resistance” (111), and the process of composition and decomposition of knowledge.

The strained metaphors reach their nadir with the article “Reinventing Technology: Artificial Intelligence from the Top of a Sycamore Tree” by Harry Halpin. Set as a rant written from the top of a nameless tree-sit, and declaring that “the re-enchantment of everyday life” will come through technology – it turns out to be a new form of the old argument about the neutrality of means. If you are a global justice activist then communications technology is a new kind of alchemy. As a technologist in the movement you have to “provide solutions that respect the very human and ecological origins of these networks... to tear down artificial divisions between technology, action, and theory” (162). Sounds like the top sheet to a venture capitalist proposal.

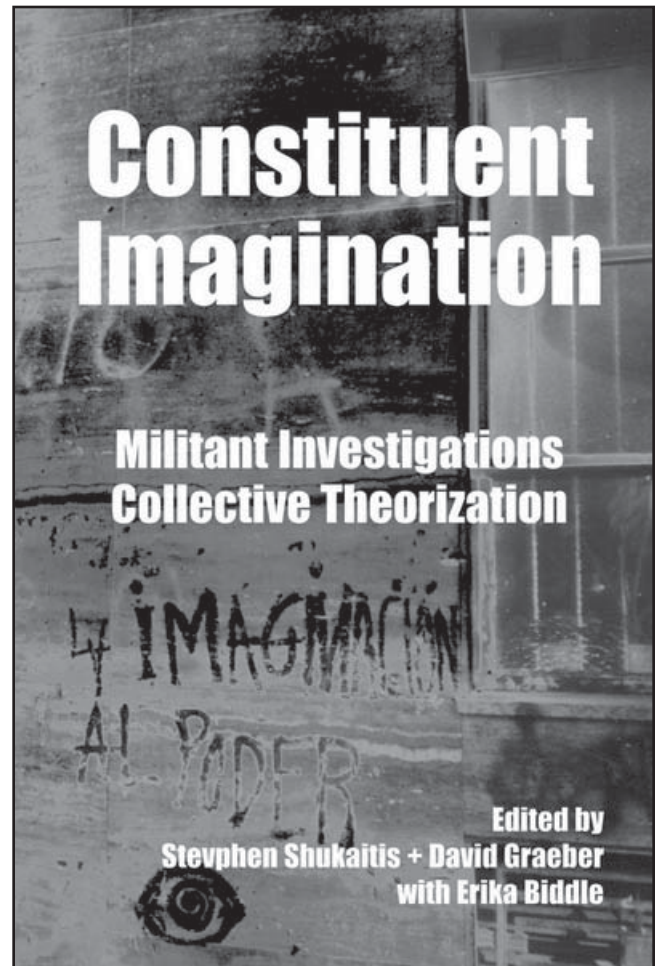
The third section, *Communities of/in Resistance*, contains the dreamy-eyed stories of how current activism, specifically around food politics, social services, homeless organizing, and knitting, pertains to “circulating moments of rupture,

through circuits and cycles of struggle, we find the processes through which communities are formed in resistance” (179).

The most engaging of these essays is “The Revolution Will Wear a Sweater: Knitting and Global Justice Activism” by Kirsty Robertson. This article doesn’t question the overarching logic of activism but does discuss a practice that is far more interesting than traditional grassroots activism or protesting. Although it doesn’t use the jargon of immanence, knitting is presented as an immanent practice, which is a correction many of the theoretical articles could have used.

Finally the last section, *Education & Ethics*, summarizes the defense of the book’s central thesis – that usable knowledge for the social justice movement has something to do with the institution of the university. Each of these authors asserts that knowledge is a superset of the university education production environment, but somehow that environment is still there haunting us in the background, like an employer whose paychecks are too small, or the dream of a goal never accomplished. Sometimes this looks like knowledge is something that can, should, and must be informed by other sources, like the Situationists

– “how we live our everyday lives has everything to do with the projects we aspire to create and enact. Theory, analysis, and narration are a central part of our daily actions, and these daily actions are, by definition the materiality of politics” (254); or science fiction – “the figure of the revolting knowledge-worker has not yet truly made its presence



known. Cyber-punk seems to have been overly optimistic” (272); or anti-racist pedagogy – “the default pedagogic and epistemic modes of the academy are, by virtue of being the historically developed and promulgated modes of a Eurocentric and authoritarian institution, antagonistic to the aims of anti-racist education” (295).

Uri Gordon's article in the last section is the strongest of the entire book in defense of the editors' central thesis. "Practising Anarchist Theory: Towards a Participatory Political Philosophy" eloquently draws together the academic texts that have taken anarchist thought seriously with a proposal for anarchist research. This article has a fascinating contradiction at its center because it both argues from the most clearly academic position (being a series of proposals, lists, and explanations) *and* concludes, at odds with itself, that

[t]he lack of rational discussion is far from the norm in the movement if we also count the everyday oral communication among anarchists, where the bulk of discussion with the movement takes place. These oral discussions, most often in the form of causal conversations among activists, tend to be of a far higher quality than what McQuinn is seeing in the narrow display box of anarchist print and Web-based media... For this reason it is extremely important for whoever wants to write about anarchism to be attentive to these oral discussions and follow them in a consistent way. (285)

*Militant Investigations, Collective Theorization* is the subtitle to this collection of autonomous marxist, anarchist, and unspecified radical tracts. The subtitle is the high-handed way that the thesis is communicated to the reader – and begs the question: what exactly is militant about the investigations and what is collective about the

theorization in this book.

Their own definition of militant investigation is a short one. It is an "intensification and deepening of the political... Militant Research starts from the understandings, experiences, and relations generated through organizing, as both a method of political action and a form of knowledge" While this definition clearly draws a line in the sand, I am not sure it is where the editors intend for it to be. For many of the people interested in the question (or practice) of how to change the world, the very word *political* has become suspect. In the same way, *organizing* is a term of the same genre, expressing a certain view of managing people – with method and goal already determined.

This way of framing the question – of asking the questions many of us consider central – by already having determined the method and the historical trajectory by which the questions will be answered – severely limited the potential of this book. That said, some of the questions are good ones and many of the authors are attempting to answer them to the best of their abilities.

Among the authors there is a common nomenclature and set of political markers and boundaries, but they are not expressed clearly by the editors themselves; instead they must be gleaned by a close reading of each of the texts (and by knowing a bit about the editors). While this book was published by the ostensibly anarchist book publisher AK Press, the editors clearly draw more inspiration from the events in France in the 60s, Italy in the 70s, and Central and South America in the 90s than they do Spain in the 30s. This isn't a problem per se but conveying the point that this volume largely comes out

of the Autonomous Marxist tradition (while the editors refer to themselves as anarchists), and what *exactly* that entails, is a central point to this collection that is never addressed, much less explained. Inquiring anarchists would like to know.

As a result, the language used throughout the volume assumes a political education and a set of motivations that will not apply to all, or even most, readers who are actually interested in the relationship between radical theory and social change. An education in 19th century Hegelian thought or 20th century post-structuralist political thought turns out to be not as relevant as is information about the lyrical polemics of Subcomandante Marcos or knowledge of the context of collective factory recovery movements in Argentina.

We can map the resonance and connections over physical space and encounters through mediated machinations and communications, through and around the disparate spaces that compose the university, the hospital, the city square, and through all spaces of life. By looking at the different circuits and channels through which information flows, we can see that cartographies of resistance trace the multiple and overlapping spaces and forms of struggle that exist, extending and expanding them. (111)

What is a "cartography of resistance"? If you are familiar with groups like *bureau d'études* and Multiplicity, you know that this term refers to a subset of the formal discipline of geography – a radical

critique of modernist cartography ala the Mercator projection. Instead of simple tweaks to Mercator to create a world map reflecting the actual size of the continents (like the Gall-Peters projection), these radical cartographers map the micro (like Multiplicity's map of two routes between the same two points in Israel – one for an Israeli, the other for a Palestinian) and the macro (as in the power map *bureau d'études* created of the US political system).

A cartography of resistance moves from the work of radical cartographers into a practice that is technically capable of evaluating relationships of probably disparate actors onto a stage where their actions can be understood, clearly conveyed to others, and proliferated. Nearly every article in this book has a few new turns of phrase along these lines, demanding further research to understand the context that they come out of and more than a little patience to understand where the reference ends and the stylistic flourish begins.

This dense "discursive regime" dominates especially the editorial voice, but also the book as a whole. The result is a book by and for specialists in this kind of language. Who are these people? Where did they go to learn this jargon? Having trained themselves in this kind of language, what do they do with it and the marginal kind of power they gain as a result?

How can we open the university to use its resources for the benefit of movements and organizing? How can we use it to create a forum for collective reflection, to re-imagine the world from where we find ourselves? It is through this

constituent process of collectively shared and embodied imagination that the boundaries of the classroom, of where knowledge is created and struggles occur, start to break down. (251)

David Graeber is a well-known figure in anarchist circles. He was one of the media spokespeople during the NYC RNC in 2004 and then made headlines (at least in the anarchist press) for his release from his job at Yale. An "out" anarchist who was also a renowned college professor in anthropology made his expulsion dramatic for many anarchists. Graeber recovered his professional standing and is currently teaching in the UK. Shukaitis is a graduate student also in the UK. Clearly these two are not evaluating the university from a distance or from a total rejection of it, but as participants who are trying to reconcile their *a priori* decisions.

The usual argument made by radicals who become professors is that every person in this society must work, and that they are just making a choice. It is one that can be criticized, but it is hardly the worst choice to be made within capitalism. Additionally, several of the authors within this collection argue, *research militancy* is a project that is defined by the tension of its relationship with academic knowledge. Who better to have this tension than self-defined radicals in the university?

But there is something about the assumption that the classroom is a locus for struggle,

A cartography of resistance moves from the work of radical cartographers into a practice that is technically capable of evaluating relationships of (probably disparate) actors onto a stage where their actions can be understood, clearly conveyed to others, and proliferated. Nearly every article in this book has a few new turns of phrase along these lines, demanding further research to understand the context that they come out of and more than a little patience to understand where the reference ends and the stylistic flourish begins.

for the creation of knowledge, that frames the presenter(s). Is it really possible to reclaim something – anything – from the hierarchical atmosphere of the Euro-American university structure? Is this question answered differently if you are on the cusp of being a professor yourself? A concern of this book is on the relevance of the university and the

inter- and intra-struggles therein.

An article by CrimethInc., called “No Gods, No Masters Degrees,” deserves special mention as a contrast to the rest of the book. Besides the witty title, this article asks many of the questions that the rest of the authors seem either oblivious to or antagonistic towards. Specialization, tradition, and the conflict between anarchist-as-researcher and anarchist-as-revolutionary are topics given only short shrift in this article but are glaring in their complete absence in the rest of the book. Like most CrimethInc. writing, this piece serves as a polemic “to life” rather than the kind of sober yet obviously engaged analysis of most of

the other articles, but again this contrast is refreshing. When you have traveled through 300 pages of articles that you suspect are central to a term paper or a doctoral thesis, reading a cry for action rather than a description of a near-action is welcome relief.

*Constituent Imagination* succeeds. It demonstrates that there is a relationship between radical theory and what remains of the movements for social change. Some good news results from this success: there will continue to be interesting thinking done about the political consequences of some of the more abstract notions of post-structuralist, autonomous, and anarchist ideas into the next few decades, by these thinkers if no one else. While many readers, and perhaps the authors themselves, may disagree, the bad news of this book is the outlook for the “movement of movements.” The gains that are struggled for in these narratives are small, if not miniscule. The vision of the constituent movements is myopic to the point of severity.

The most paradigmatic movements—to the extent that they are even treated in this text—are the series of struggles in Argentina in the first part of this decade. They are little known, and were immediately claimed by liberals and defeated by globalization. This series of events, popularized by the Naomi Klein documentary “The Take,” do indeed hearken back to a time where workers’ power, conscious human subjects, and hope-above-all were elements of our political experience. We should not even feel nostalgia for the incongruity of this incomplete view of this moment. We should feel a cultural disconnect.

As is often the case when ideas from one part of the world are shared (often by exuberant fans of those ideas) with another culture, something is lost in translation. In the case of *Colectivo Situaciones*, who are impressive in their articulation about practice and thought and have very little exposure in North American radical circles, their ideas about effective experiments, research militancy, and the “sad militant” are exciting but odd. Can even the North American radical academic get much out of becoming “militant” when expressing vague anti-war beliefs is enough to get them on a right-wing radical watch list? Are the ideas of *Colectivo Situaciones* being properly understood when they are evoked as in the article “Drifting Through the Knowledge Machine?” The article cites *Colectivo Situaciones* as an inspiration in its description of a Labor Day protest where certain university employees were not given the day off work (because they weren’t properly defined as workers). Their protest involved creating an “ad-hoc intervention group” vis-à-vis a group of employees (aka knowledge workers) protesting their exclusion by doing “militant research.” This entailed having students and passersby fill out questionnaires and walking around campus in a “stationary-drift.” North Americans’ lack of a social movement of their own translates as a hunger for the social movements of other peoples and places.

The language used throughout the volume assumes a political education and a set of motivations that will not apply to all, or even most, readers who are actually interested in the relationship between radical theory and social change.

# Reviewing *Expectations*

Review by Dot Matrix

**Expect Resistance: a field manual**  
by CrimethInc  
(CrimethInc Ex-worker's  
Collective, 2008 )  
344 pages. Paperback. \$25.95

*Expect Resistance* is a collection of reprinted essays predominantly from *Harbinger* and *Hunter Gatherer*, glued together by a newly written fictional narrative illustrating how some of the points made in the essays might be experienced in someone's life.

CrimethInc's pieces are repetitive, their thinking is frequently simplistic (what is the point of characterizing judges as pompous and lawyers as expensive? What do these simplistic characterizations have to do with the problems of the court system?!), but most of their message is sound: anti-democratic, anti-capitalist, pro-individual, pro-contradiction, with some interesting analysis about what is good action and about individuals' relationships to community (and vice versa). In general, CrimethInc gets a thumbs up.

CrimethInc is known for publishing books that valorize travel, movement, ease of flow. Indicative of this perspective is an essay in *Expect Resistance* that states explicitly that walls between communities are barriers between people.

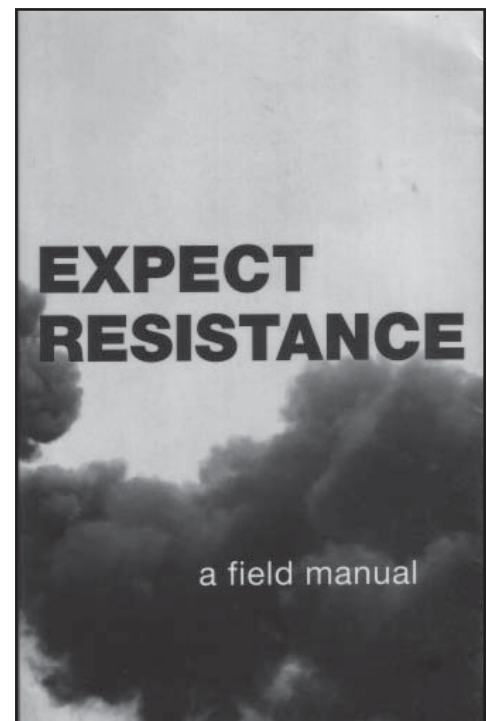
If we were really 'out for ourselves' then we would demol-

ish every barrier that separates us, for healthy relations with others are the most precious form of wealth. The proverbial white picket fence of the suburbs, now hypertrophied into cinderblock and barbed wire, indicates a pathological drive to deprive oneself of all the nutrients that wait in the outside world. (100)

While there is a truth to this, of course, the statement as it stands makes its point a bit too enthusiastically. A different assessment of the need for, and usefulness of, boundaries is made in *A Pattern of Language*, a book introducing a language of design and community. This book points out that built or natural boundaries are an essential part of creating and maintaining a sense of place and cohesion. *A Pattern*, the second of two massive books on creating livable areas – including places for work, residences, and play, and the interactions between them – is not an anarchist book, but it is an in-depth study on what has worked for people, with the radical understanding that people have created more appropriate spaces for themselves than professionals have. (And if society were organized in the local, diverse, small-scale way that this book presents, who knows what other, more fundamental, changes would follow?) The significance of boundaries is stressed

over and over again in this book.

The mosaic of subcultures requires that hundreds of different cultures live, in their own way, at full intensity, next door to one another. But subcultures have their own ecology. They can only live at full intensity, unhampered by their neighbors, if they are physically separated by physical boundaries... For example, in San Francisco the two most distinctive areas are Telegraph Hill and Chinatown. Telegraph Hill is surrounded on two sides by the docks. Chinatown is bounded on two sides by the city's



banking area. (77)

The strength of the boundary is essential to a neighborhood. If the boundary is too weak the neighborhood will not be able to maintain its own identifiable character. (87)

However, *A Pattern* also talks about the necessity of spaces, physically in between the subcultures and/or neighborhoods, that allow for intentional mingling – as well as the need for clear openings in the boundaries.

...at various levels in the structure of the town, there are identifiable units... All of them get their identity most clearly from the fact that you pass through a definite gateway to enter them—it is this gateway acting as a threshold that creates the unit. (277)

In other words, *A Pattern* emphasizes the usefulness of clear areas and clear transitions between areas, rather than the idea that each individual makes a way in a vacuum of space, heedless of (and uninfluenced by) the landscape.

Also typical of CrimethInc is the linking together of all good things (love is happiness is joy is faith is ease is generosity, and so on). This tendency certainly appears in *ER* (63, 102, etc), and one of the consequences is to reject the implications of us being in conflict with ourselves, of our desires sometimes being mutually exclusive. If everything good is everything else that is good, then the choices we have are simple. But some of the good things contradict each other (at least in a given situation); if I want to support someone who is having a hard time, and I also

want to go on this trip around the world, then some balance has to be found. That balance is possible, of course, but to ignore that there are conflicts in my desires is to ignore that I have to think creatively, make choices.

This is connected to the question of boundaries and flow. We make our best choices when we know who we are, what we're capable of, what we're most likely to follow through on. Knowing who we are involves acknowledging and accepting things that we're *not* (even if – or especially when – we want to be those things), as well as *how* we can actually make the changes in ourselves that we want, and *which* changes are possible.

Christian-based American culture encourages us to think that we can be anything that we want, that we are perfectible; movies, books, advertising give us various tactics that we can use to make our lives and ourselves exactly the way we think they should be. CrimethInc, like *Adbusters*, works to co-opt the tools of the culture – to use that mythology to anarchist purposes, to use faith and hope in ways that are subversive to this society. Opinions will of course vary on whether that is a worth-while or feasible goal.

As is consistent for CrimethInc, *ER* is an effort to exceed the form – not in number of words, but in placement. From the front cover to the back, urgent exhortations provoke the reader, encouraging the re-thinking of mundane patterns and the envisioning of a brighter future. This stuffing of the form is a typical example of the enthusiastic designers CrimethInc is known for, and includes some nice one liners - “the crowd goes wild! (some assembly required)” is my favorite (illustrating an essay on crowd analysis), followed closely by “anyone who isn’t

on both sides of the issue is clearly against me from some direction.”

Not only do they stuff little bits of urgency into every nook and cranny of the hard copy, but on their website they write how they want *ER* to be reviewed - and so extend the message of the book in that way also, making it a multi-media event. (This cross-platform effort is of course becoming more common as publishing groups attempt to use the best of both online and hardcopy forms.) That they feel the need to give directions on how people should review this book is to varying degrees funny, self indulgent, and arrogant, implying that they are unwilling to accept that different people will get different things out of what they write.

Probably the clearest general statement about this book is that it is a different and more transparent kind of political novel – with the essays emphasizing left-brain food for thought, and the narrative fleshing out the ideas, bringing them home. This makes it a nice piece for people who are perhaps not used to (or comfortable with) reading either fiction or essays, and so can use this transitional style to connect the dots.

It would be great if CrimethInc wrote an inspirational piece or book that was aimed at people who have more nuanced and sophisticated perspectives on the world and on anarchy, great if they made such people feel the burn in exactly the way CrimethInc seem to be striving for. Sadly, as it stands, they instead perpetuate the gap between idealistic urgency and sophisticated analysis.

# Bad on *Anarchy*, Good on *Context*

Review by Lawrence Jarach

**Sacco and Vanzetti:  
The Men, the Murders,  
and the Judgment of Mankind**

by Bruce Watson

(Viking, 2007)

433 pages. Hardcover. \$25.95

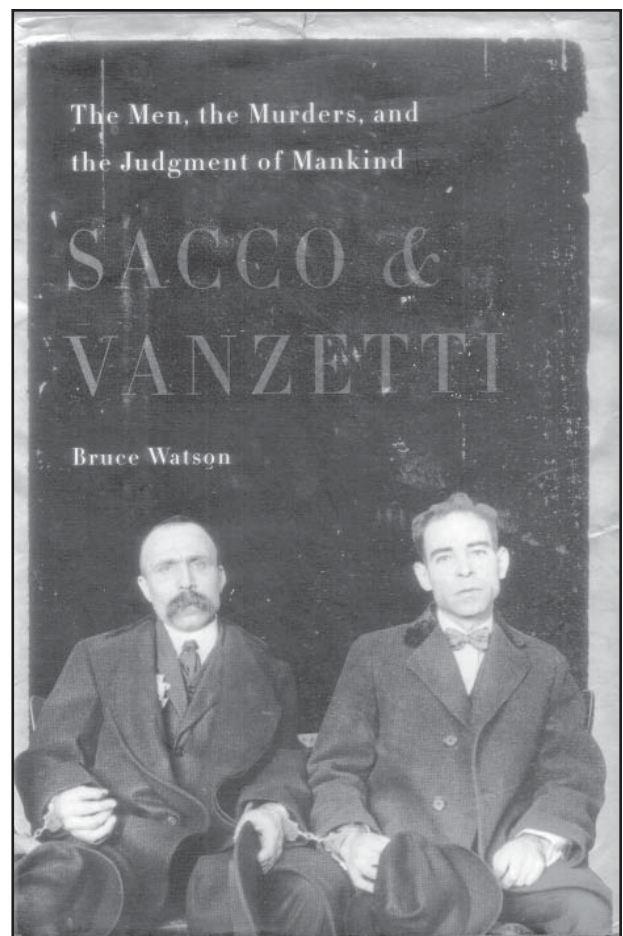
I first learned of Sacco and Vanzetti years before I started to self-identify as an anarchist. Their sad story of not getting a fair trial in the immediate aftermath of the Red Scare of 1919 was outlined in my American history class in middle school. They were presented as the victims of an overzealous (and perhaps a little paranoid) law enforcement and judicial system fighting back against what they believed was an onslaught of foreign radicals, especially Bolsheviks. Their cases were brought up to show that, regardless of the past faults in American law enforcement and jurisprudence, it is ultimately a self-correcting system. We were taught that with enlightened reform and the constant striving for justice and equality before the law, the American system of justice is the best in the world. Nothing much was mentioned about their actual politics besides them not wanting to fight in the First World War; otherwise they were portrayed as generic radicals or agitators. Reading the correspondence of Sacco and Vanzetti almost twenty years ago, I was struck by their eloquence and passion, qualities that eventually attracted the

thousands of their supporters among the middle classes in North America and beyond for the six years between their convictions and executions. That they were supported from the moment of their arrests by anarchists and other radicals goes without saying (the varying reasons for that radical support makes an interesting story by itself, an early example of Leninist opportunism—see below).

Comparisons of the case of Sacco and Vanzetti with that of the Haymarket anarchists are obvious. In school I learned little more about the eight Chicago anarchists who were brought to trial and convicted. They were properly called anarchists (although that of course was never explained adequately), but the context of their arrests, trial, and execution seemed more about the reformist labor struggles during the growing pains of American industrialism than about anarchism or any other radical—let alone revolutionary—ideas. This case was shown to be a gross miscarriage of justice; eight were convicted and four executed for setting the stage for the

possibility for a bomb to be thrown at the cops. There were so many procedural problems that the governor of Illinois pardoned the surviving three defendants and exonerated the others soon after the executions. It would take fifty years for the governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to make a gesture of apology (not exoneration) on behalf of the memories of Sacco and Vanzetti.

Bruce Watson is a journalist cur-



rently living in Massachusetts, making his personal interest in the history of that state's most notorious capital criminal case more of a motivation than it might be for a non-anarchist living elsewhere. Watson has a decent understanding of the anarchism of Sacco and Vanzetti (and the circle of Italian immigrant anarchists on the East Coast), mostly due to his reliance on Paul Avrich's excellent study of the two men and the circle of American *galleanisti* (*Sacco and Vanzetti; The Anarchist Background*). Unfortunately for anarchist readers, he provides nothing to connect the ideas of Sacco and Vanzetti with contemporary anarchists; surely some contemporary anarchists might have a few things to say about the case. As with most non-anarchists who bother to take a look at the way the state has dealt murderously with its anarchist challengers, Watson's interest is purely historical. For him, Sacco and Vanzetti's anarchism is only germane as a context for them being "armed to the teeth" on the night they were arrested. Even the most fanatical anarchist assassins in the period of propaganda of the deed weren't "armed to the teeth"; at most they had two pistols and maybe a dagger—hardly the model of a one-man army intent on visiting mayhem on the unsuspecting targets of their wrath. Sacco and Vanzetti—packing a pistol each, with a handful of extra bullets—aren't exactly my idea of a walking armory.

What Watson *does* do well is set up the general American backdrop to the story of the plight of the two Italian immigrants. Mentions of Babe Ruth's homerun record, Lindbergh's trans-Atlantic solo flight, Charlie Chaplin's divorce, Prohibition and the attendant growth of organized crime (which had another specifically important impact on the case) run throughout the book, contextualizing the wider culture.

Throughout the 1920s, there were plenty of distractions to keep Americans unconcerned about the case of "two damned dagos and anarchists" (Vanzetti) and "those anarchistic bastards" (Judge Thayer).

Watson never lets reader know whether or not he believes Sacco and/or Vanzetti were involved in the South Braintree payroll robbery and the murder. He does go through a brief summary of the various other studies of the subject, from the total innocence scenario of the defense lawyers, to the bizarre thesis that Sacco was guilty and Vanzetti innocent (but that he kept quiet because of some anarchist *omertà*), to the unshakable faith of the prosecution and the Yankee establishment that both of them did it and that they deserved to fry.

Aside from the controversial ballistics evidence (which included a replaced gun barrel, and only one of the four bullets taken from the body of a payroll guard being identified as coming from Sacco's gun—the one with the replaced barrel) and the famous cap that didn't fit, there was an inordinate concentration on the defendants' behavior at the time of their arrests, which was called "consciousness of guilt" (a concept that, incredibly, still has some kind of official legal status).

[T]he judge... summed up the prosecution's case, reviewing conflicting stories of the arrest and spending fifteen minutes explaining "consciousness of guilt." He did not, however, sum up the defense's case. (167)

This "consciousness of guilt" was supposed to be a key factor in finding Sacco and Vanzetti guilty of the robbery-murder. Why would they have been armed the night of their arrest?

The presumption was they were armed habitually, implying that they were in fact professional gangsters at a time when the ascendancy of Italian gangsters was being hyped in the national media. And why had they lied about nearly everything asked of them by the cops on the night of their arrest?

That they were somehow involved in the series of bomb attacks against prominent capitalists, judges, and prosecutors that led to the Palmer Raids is now beyond doubt (although it wasn't at the time); that they were friends of Andrea Salsedo—who'd been implicated in some of the attacks and been subsequently suicided at the hands of the NYPD—is clear. They were most likely not the only anarchists (immigrant, Italian, or otherwise) going around armed at the time. But none of that had anything to do with them getting picked up on the night of their arrests, nor with the South Braintree holdup, the robbery-murder they were soon accused of perpetrating.

The case, which I cannot outline adequately in this review—for that I recommend this book—was riddled with inconsistencies, innuendo, bias, and xenophobia. What is inspiring is the kind of immediate solidarity and support generated by the friends and associates of the two men. Within 24 hours of their arrests, a Sacco-Vanzetti Defense Committee was set up, headed by Vanzetti's friend Aldino Felicani—who never left his position as the foremost organizer and fundraiser for the next seven years. The Defense Committee, while raising about \$300,000 dollars (quite a hefty sum in those pre-Depression years), proved ineffective in providing legal support; the second lawyer they eventually hired should probably have been their first one. Even so, the Committee did an excellent job of spreading the word about the case internationally. By the time of the ex-

ecution, thousands around the world were willing to attack symbols (both American and local) of capitalism:

Across Europe...a great wave of grief gave way to cathartic violence. All that day in Paris, tanks surrounded the American embassy, while mobs raided cafes, turning tables and chairs into barricades, tearing up lampposts and hurling them through plate-glass windows. The façade of the Moulin Rouge was smashed. Riots in Germany claimed three lives. In London, bobbies on horseback routed protesters in Hyde Park. Mobs in Geneva ransacked American targets—Model Ts, shops selling Lucky Strikes, and theaters showing Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks films. Across South America, widespread walkouts idled factories and left cities without taxis and buses. American businesses in Buenos Aires were stoned. Around the world, protesters swarmed through capitals from Amsterdam to Tokyo.... (347)

Besides the problems plaguing the relationship of the Defense Committee and the first lawyer they hired, there were conflicts with the Leninists who were in charge of the International Labor Defense. As has been the case throughout the history of the difficult relationship of Marxists to anarchists, the authoritarians saw the case as a way to extend their influence among the American working class. Members of this Communist Party front group (founded in 1925 as the American affiliate of the Moscow-based International Red Aid) attached themselves to the Sacco-Vanzetti case

soon after being created. At first they helped raise funds for the Defense Committee, but then they tried to take it over. Felicani and the other anarchists rebuffed all overtures of non-financial aid, leading to inevitable conflict. As Watson points out,

Communists...were finding new ways to exploit Sacco and Vanzetti. The *Daily Worker*...peddled a "Sacco-Vanzetti Anthology of Verses" and hyped its subscription drive as "a necessary and vital part of the campaign for the freedom of Sacco and Vanzetti." Such tactics gave Red-baiters added evidence that the condemned were dangerous

subversives, yet supporters remained suspicious

of the Communists in their midst. Ever since Communists and labor organizers had come to blows at a Sacco-Vanzetti rally in Manhattan, the rift had widened. As party members grew increasingly shrill, their callousness appalled sincere supporters. Communists flocking to Boston, Gardner Jackson remembered, unquestioningly "preferred Sacco and Vanzetti dead [rather] than alive." Arriving to picket the State House, the writer Katherine Anne Porter told one Communist she hoped Sacco and Vanzetti could be saved. "Saved?" the woman asked. "Who wants them saved? What earthly good would they do us alive?" (335)

In addition,

Watson's interest is purely historical; he provides nothing to connect the ideas of Sacco and Vanzetti with contemporary anarchists.

Communist leaders quickly fell under suspicion. Peppered by rumors of siphoned funds, Felicani demanded a full account of contributions to the ILD [International Labor Defense]. The Communist front stopped sending money and, in the gathering frenzy, the backbiting intensified. Claiming Communists were the rightful representatives of two class-warfare victims, the ILD offered to merge with Felicani's committee... Rejected, the ILD accused Felicani's committee of selling out "the class birthright

of the Sacco-Vanzetti case..." Felicani soon told supporters to stop donating to Communists. Years later, one repentant Communist confirmed that funds had been siphoned. "Some of the money went to the *Daily Worker*...and the rest was spent on campaigning to enhance the prestige of the Party," Benjamin Gitlow recalled. (278-9)

Unsurprisingly, support from liberal intellectuals and civil libertarians was qualitatively different. Future Supreme Court justice Felix Frankfurter, outraged at the numerous irregularities in the trial, took his time reading through the transcripts and interviewing various supporters of the two men. Finally in March 1927, his

“J’accuse!” was published.

Frankfurter’s *Atlantic Monthly* article, “The Case of Sacco and Vanzetti,” was concise, detailed, and as sharp as a scalpel. Suddenly, Americans who had considered the affair too complex to merit their attention had a primer on Sacco and Vanzetti... [they] read the Harvard professor’s opinion of Thayer’s recent denial [of a

actions heard around the world in the months leading up to the execution. Yet much as the massive international demonstrations against the impending Second Gulf Massacre were ignored by the oligarchs and warmongers, so too did their forebears ignore the calls of the well-heeled and unwashed masses alike, three-quarters of a century before. The governor of Massachusetts, a quintessential Yankee elitist, exacted his toll on the two Italian anarchists.

### What Watson *does* do well is set the general American backdrop to the story.

new trial based on numerous objections to the conduct of the original trial, as well as a confession from Celestino Madeiros, a self-described participant in the South Braintree holdup]—“a farrago of misquotations, misrepresentations, suppressions, and mutilations”—and his charge to the jury that “directs the emotions only too clearly.” And readers everywhere learned that Red Scare zealotry had resulted in forty-four convictions since overturned for misconduct of judge or public prosecutor. Why not this one, Frankfurter implied. (287)

Ultimately, of course, the Yankee establishment got what they wanted: Sacco and Vanzetti were executed. Hundreds of thousands of anarchists, radicals, and others who were unhappy with the manifest injustice of finding Sacco and Vanzetti guilty in the first place made their voices and

Outside the prison, sobbing or silent witnesses slowly dispersed. “Life felt very grubby and mean,” Katherine Anne Porter remembered, “as if we were all of us soiled and disgraced.” When she said as much to a stranger, he shot back, “What do you mean? There’s no such thing as disgrace anymore.” (335)

The determination of those in the ruling class to take vengeance upon and make examples of anyone bold enough to fight back against them openly is not a force to be underestimated. The history of extra-legal murders by elements of law enforcement and so-called intelligence agencies provide adequate examples. The history of the judicial murders of anarchists such as (among others) Francisco Ferrer, Emile Henry, Kotoku Shusui, and Salvador Puig Antich show that even mass demonstrations cannot sway the decisions of the hierarchs and their pliant guardians in the judiciary; once a target has been identified, an execution or life imprisonment will be implemented—regardless of that decision’s unpopularity. The fate of Sacco and Vanzetti was sealed from the moment of their arrest on the

night of May 5, 1920; until the Commonwealth of Massachusetts finally got its revenge on August 23, 1927 legal petitions, writs, and appeals were consistently denied and public demonstrations ignored.

Bourgeois justice is an abstract concept that only has incidental overlaps with the objective facts of any particular case. Investigators, lawyers, and judges aren’t necessarily interested in discovering the truth as much as they are invested in maintaining the social fabric of a class-based society. Discovering all the relevant facts pertaining to a case requires much more work than finding a suspect and building a case against her/him/them from part—or most—of the already available facts. Lives are destroyed every day in the service of this irredeemably corrupt system of retribution, from the routine beatings meted out to arrestees to the framing of the innocent and/or the guilty, from the use of torture to elicit confessions (the current case of the San Francisco 8 comes immediately to mind) to the use of convicts to carry out extra-legal murder of those who avoid capital punishment. Sacco and Vanzetti were caught in the web of stupidity, revenge, and fright that characterizes all criminal cases that contain even a hint of a radical political element. The Terrorism Enhancements recently given to many of the “Green Scare” defendants, and the disproportionate sentences of armed leftists in the 1970s compared to those on the right who’d been charged and sentenced to similar—if not identical—crimes is abundant proof that the branch of the state that is used to institutionalize class revenge is no more neutral (or blind) than the economic system of capitalism it protects.

# A View on War From the Bleachers

Reviewed by Clayton James

## War Nerd

By Gary Brecher  
(Soft Skull Press, 2008)  
317 pages. Paper. \$15.95

Gary Brecher is a fucking slob. He orders out for pizza all the time. He spills Diet Coke all over his computer keyboard. He rarely moves from his fortress of solitude (his computer desk). For work he punches numbers (doing mundane data entry) and his free time is spent cruising the Internet. What makes this self-confessed American Nationalist even remotely interesting is his obsession; he is a war nerd. Brecher follows, and analyzes, current and past wars from his computer armchair.

Part humorist and part commentator, Brecher writes a column in *eXile*, the English-language, Moscow-based newspaper. Having never been involved in the military, Brecher writes about war like a boxing spectator might write about a match. Which in this case proves that you can learn just as much from the commentary of an informed spectator as you can from the fighters themselves.

Brecher has a distinctively absurdist point of view. The first of six points in his “doctrine on war” is that there is no inherent meaning or internal logic in war, it is just one tribe against another; “Most people are not rational; they are *tribal*: ‘My gang yeah, your gang boo!’ It really is that simple. The rest is cosmetics”(317). His view of war as absurd spectacle

allows Brecher not only to poke fun at the participants of war but also enables him to have a strategic perspective. He outlines his basic points in the end of the book (which should, for clarity’s sake, have been the first part).

The second point in his doctrine is that most wars are asymmetrical or irregular. There is one side of the war that has tons of money, tons of material, and tons of soldiers, while the other relies on a guerrilla army, popular support, and innovation. He doesn’t mention why this is the case these days, but I would guess that it is a product of the Cold War. The large super powers are now in cahoots so the good old days of large nation states duking it out are gone.

His third point (like his others) is an extension of his first point. In modern asymmetrical wars, the goal of guerrillas/irregulars/insurgents is not military victory or the defeat of the opposing army. The objective is territorial; to reclaim territory, to wipe out the neighboring tribe/ethnicity/religious bastards next door. This should sound familiar to anarchists, whose goals are not military, or even territorial, but social. Anarchists don’t want more territory, they don’t want the death of all capitalist military members, but instead want the destruction of capitalist social relationships. This point underlines the ideological aspect of war. This aspect has been pointed out before, in a more round-about way, by General Von Clausewitz – who stated that war was the continuation of (nation state) policy by other means.

Point number four should make primitivists cream their jeans. “High tech weaponry is mostly useless in

these wars”(317). His best examples of this are the rocket propelled grenade (RPG) and the 2002 Millennium Challenge war games.

The RPG is one sweet piece of weaponry; it can take out soldiers as well as expensive tanks and choppers. Back in the 1970s the Russians developed the RPG for infantry squads against US tanks. The RPG made its debut in Vietnam then moved out into the big bright world of the Middle East. Among the RPG’s assets are its availability (there are more RPGs in the world than virgin D & D players); weight (the RPG weighs a mere fifteen pounds, less than all the D & D books those virgins carry around in their bags), and flexibility. The RPG works not only as an anti-armor device – it can put a serious dent in troop transporting vehicles – but also in anti-aircraft engagements; they have a self-detonation feature after the projectile has gone 920 meters. If you shoot up at an enemy chopper from far enough away and at the right angle the grenade will blow up on impact. The enemy chopper will go down with the big kaboom. To top off all its great features, the RPG is ridiculously easy to operate, easily to reload, and cheap. It inflicted more than half of the US casualties in Iraq, prior to the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

The Millennium Challenge war games were set in the Persian Gulf in 2002. The scenario had the US invading either Iraq or Iran. During the games the US had large surface ships parked in the Gulf. The enemy fleet (played by General Paul van Riper)

had a collection of small planes, ships, fishing boats, and patrol boats circle the Gulf continually, which constituted a tremendous amount of traffic. When the US fleet ordered all the small planes and ships out of the territory, van Riper ordered an all-out attack on the fleet. Van Riper's swarm and kamikaze approach sank the US fleet with inexpensive and easily accessible tools.

"You cannot defeat these groups by killing lots of their members. In fact, they want you to do that"(317). Point number five acknowledges that war is no longer about killing off the enemy's army but about capturing land – about establishing political, ethnic, or religious control; getting your team blasted just makes you look like the underdog for the local population. In asymmetrical wars – where the underdog tribe has a higher birthrate than the empire it's facing (due to the underdog's poverty... the more poverty there is, the higher the birthrate) – getting blasted means more zealous teenage recruits willing to die for the cause.

Which leads us to his last point: propaganda and morale are more important than military superiority. High morale and being able to have popular support matters more than having a large army. War is no longer fought

on battlefields; it is no longer fought in trenches but instead is set in urban areas, in spaces of dense population.

The good news about these characteristics of modern warfare is that it is an argument for the potential of anarchist victories. We've seen a few anarchists win before. Mahkno had a decent run, fighting in accordance to Brecher's doctrine: he won the hearts and minds of the people; wasn't fighting for military victory; fought with low tech weapons, and used guerrilla swarm tactics.

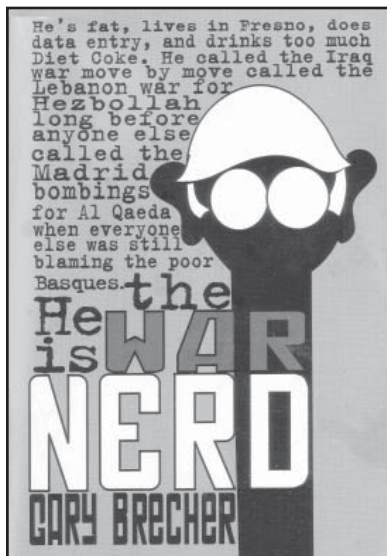
Modern guerrilla groups (with loose anarchist associations) such as the Earth and Animal Liberation Fronts (ELF and ALF respectively) use Brecher's framework. The ELF and ALF operate with small cells that have been difficult for the state to infiltrate, as demonstrated in the recent trial of Eric McDavid. McDavid was implicated because he was involved romantically with an informant (Anna) rather than because he was especially implicated in illegal activity. The number of people involved in ELF/ALF cells is small, especially compared to the number of people assigned to find insurgents. Brecher points out that generally about a dozen people are needed to ferret out just one insurgent. Both ALF and ELF operate under ideological guidelines aimed not at military victory but at economically damaging corporations. The goal is to stop the target corporation from animal experimentation, logging, mink farming, etc. Both groups use low-tech devices, like gasoline and bolt cutters, to carry out their operations. Finally, both attempt to gain the support of the population by appealing to people's desire for justice based on an environmental ethos. They are textbook guerrillas in Brecher's view.

The upcoming Republican and Democratic Conventions (RNC and DNC) are going to be sites of anarchist battle, and so deserve a look. The protests against the RNC and DNC, aimed at disrupting the conventions, are being organized by an anti-authoritarian net-

work called Unconventional Action. UA supports a diversity of tactics, like all guerrilla groups – which must rely on a variety of cheap and accessible tactics to achieve their goals.

The strategy for the RNC is clearly laid out on the network's website ([www.unconventionalaction.org](http://www.unconventionalaction.org)) They have a three-tiered plan: to create a series of blockades around the meeting site; to immobilize transportation for the delegates; and to block the five bridges that connect St. Paul and Minneapolis, where the convention will be held. Brecher would be sure to decry the tactic of displaying a strategy openly (for example on the website, and more recently on the local Twin Cities Fox news station). While it may have seemed sensible to appeal for support, it also announces their plans to the state, creating the likelihood of a more direct confrontation than makes little sense for guerrilla forces. The primary problem with battling the state at conventions, summits, and large anti-war protests is that these are now predictable sites of conflict for the state, which means that they are able to deploy all of its resources. The protesters seem to wish desperately for the good old days of Clausewitz when wars were staged between two large groups, and the total destruction of the enemy's army was the ultimate achievement. Seattle worked because the police were caught unawares; now with major actions happening in every city, the state can be well prepared for the protesters. In Seattle the police did not pay attention to the public calls for protesters to come and agitate, but they have learned from that mistake, and now have a solid ear to the ground and have effectively contained dissent.

*War Nerd* is a useful and strange place to give valuable and hopeful insight to anarchists who are serious about fighting the state.



# Epic Russian History – *Pugachev via Pushkin*

Review by A. Burkin

**Russkiy Bunt**  
(*The Captain's Daughter*)

2000

Directed by Aleksandr Proshkin  
130 mins.

*"Better drink the blood of the living  
just once than feed on carrion for  
300 years."*

Faithfully based on Alexander Pushkin's *A History of Pugachev* and the novella *The Captain's Daughter*, the stirring historical Russian drama *Russkiy Bunt* (aka *The Captain's Daughter*) blends a love story against the backdrop of the Pugachev Rebellion of 1773-1775, the final and arguably one of the most significant revolts against Muscovite domination and expansionism into the Ukraine. Fascinated by Pugachev, Pushkin traveled to the Urals to gather information about this legendary, dissident Cossack. Tsar Nicholas I ordered Pushkin to alter the title of his work from *A History of Pugachev* to *A History of the Pugachev Rising*, and according to Paul Avrich's wonderful book *Russian Rebels 1600-1800*, the Tsar decreed, "a criminal like Pugachev can have no history" (2). This statement is one more example of the fact that history is both created and destroyed by the state. Furthermore, Pushkin was subjected to increasing censorship and surveillance, and his death in a duel in 1837 was considered by many tsarists to be a socially

acceptable politically motivated assassination.

*Russkiy Bunt* begins with a scene of Catherine the Great (Olga Antonova) and her courtiers as she reads a letter informing her that her spouse, the recently deposed Tsar Peter III, is dead. While she reads the letter aloud announcing Peter's death by "hemorrhoidal colics," the film juxtaposes this official version with the unofficial reality of flashback scenes of Russian nobles strangling Peter. This opening contrast of the reality of Peter's violent death against the pomp and luxury of Catherine's court sets the stage for the rest of the film. Serfs scurry around to prepare a feast for the Tsarina and her nobles, staging colorful mountains of perfect fruit displays. As the fruit falls, symbolically refusing to stay in place, the camera pans downwards silently comparing these fantastic scenes of lavish plenty and opulence against the scenes of the serfs below stairs toiling to maintain the luxury demanded by the nobles.

The film then moves on to the story of young Pyotr (Mateusz Damiecki). The son of a nobleman with 300 serfs to call his own, Pyotr is well on his way to a useless life of decadence and debauchery when his father decides to intervene and sends him off to the military. While Pyotr would prefer the glamour of the guards at St Petersburg, his father insists on sending him to the remote outpost of the Belogorsk

Fort. It's winter. Pyotr and his loyal serf are lost in the snow when they are saved by a strange, roguish Cossack named Pugachev (Vladimir Mashkov). This is the beginning of a significant relationship between the young, naïve Pyotr and the seasoned Cossack leader who's portrayed with a wild intensity and madness.

Rewarding Pugachev with his red, fur-lined coat, Pyotr continues on to his assignment at the fort where he promptly falls in love with the captain of the fort's daughter, Masha (Karolina Gruszka). But Pyotr has a rival in the sneaky Savelyich (Vladimir Ilyin).

The Russian forces at the fort spend their days drilling and training, and the officers always have the soldiers (serfs forced into military service) and the peasants to mistreat if they get too bored. In spite of the impression that they are just waiting for another rebellion to occur, the officers are not particularly uneasy about the prospect of a bloody conflict. The officers' complacency towards a battle with the Cossacks can be explained by the fact that just the year before, the Russians squashed another uprising. Though the captain's wife admits, "Bullets and torture had a short-lived effect," the Russian officers regard the Cossacks as unruly underlings, not as serious adversaries. While the Russian forces wait in the fort, there's a great deal of unrest amongst the

Cossacks, and Pugachev is particularly discontented. Declaring himself to be Tsar Peter, and using Pyotr's coat as a tool to establish his legitimacy, Pugachev begins whipping up fellow Cossacks and demanding that they join forces to overthrow the Russians.

One of the best scenes in this marvelous film depicts Cossacks out on an ice fishing expedition on the frozen Yaik River. Creating casualties as they travel, a horde of mounted Cossacks conduct the fishing trip in such a savage fashion that it's easy to imagine that the rebellion has already begun. But in this case, the quarry is food--the huge fish that are hauled out unceremoniously onto the ice and carved open. This is simply

The film captures the insanity of the situation as the region passes from Russian control to Cossack control, and people switch allegiances when expedient. This rapid switching of allegiances assumes surreal dimensions with the bizarre contrasts of Cossack life with Russian life.

an incredible scene, and I suspect a western director could not attain this level of authenticity. The Cossacks descend onto the frozen ice and slaughter the fish, carving out the caviar and shoveling it into their mouths while the eviscerated fish gasp for air on the ice. This scene foreshadows the slaughter to come and depicts the Cossacks as merciless warriors who will make short work of the effete bewigged Russian officers. In the middle of this bloody scene of death, Pugachev arrives at the side of the frozen river and promises the Cossacks that they will own the Yaik if they join him.

Meanwhile back at the fort, the Russians seem vaguely aware of the trouble gathering just outside of their walls. The film creates a strong sense of doom as scenes of Pugachev and his forces are juxtaposed with scenes at the Belogorsk Fort, and finally the Russian troops see the Cossacks approaching. Even at this point, the Russians don't seem to grasp the seriousness of their fate.

While the film explores the relationship between Pugachev and Pyotr, it emphasizes the fickle nature of both fate and monarchs. The scenes of Pugachev and his Cossacks are simply phenomenal. In a Hollywood version, the romance between Pyotr and Masha would no doubt have been the focus of the film, and a good excuse for some naked action. A top Hollywood actor would play the part of Pyotr and he would have been depicted as some sort of hero who performs superhuman acrobatic deeds. In *Russkiy Bunt*, the romance takes back seat to the rebellion, and the emphasis is on the violence of the Cossacks and the relationships between the main male characters. In one scene, for example, Pugachev confronts

Savelyich and subdues him through a wild, bloody, drunken bout of Cossack dancing. The film captures the insanity of the situation as the region passes from Russian control to Cossack control, and people switch allegiances when expedient. This rapid switching of allegiances assumes surreal dimensions with the bizarre contrasts of Cossack life with Russian life. The Russian nobility are totally out of touch with those they rule, and the film draws clear demarcations between the cultures of the serfs, the Cossacks, and the nobles; there's no romanticism regarding the Cossacks, and both sides are depicted slaughtering, torturing, and pillaging.

The film doesn't explore the fact that Pugachev, a Don Cossack, wasn't the first or the last person to claim to be Peter III, and at least for part of the film there's the idea that perhaps even Pugachev believes his own claim to the throne. Neither does the film elaborate on Pugachev's reasons for revolt other than the fact that he hadn't been paid by Catherine in over a year. Although he served in the military numerous times, Pugachev was also, at several times in his life, a deserter.

In *Russian Rebels 1600-1800*, Avrich describes the social conditions that fed the Pugachev Rebellion, the fourth major revolt led by a Cossack. While the previous insurrections took place further west, the Yaik Cossacks were mainly descendants of Don and Volga Cossacks who'd moved further east in an attempt to avoid Muscovite expansion, so this was a group of Cossacks who'd already tried to actively avoid being incorporated into Russian society and so would not take the yoke easily. Peter the Great incorporated the Yaik Cossacks into the Russian state system, and expansionism continued after his death with forts and outposts established along the Yaik River. Fishing was the main livelihood of the region, so it makes

sense that one of the most serious arguments erupted over government control of this resource (the state demanded huge annual concession payments), and it also makes perfect, poetic sense to include fishing in the frozen Yaik River in the film. Also, the film doesn't make it clear but in 1765, military service became mandatory for all fit Cossacks, and while some resisted, Russian troops from the capital of the region, the Orenburg Fort, grabbed males by force and hauled them off for military service. Prior to this, military service was voluntary, and the Yaik Cossacks had their own detachments and their own elected officers. This all changed shortly after Catherine the Great took the throne. By 1768, Yaik Cossacks were inducted into the regular Russian army, and in this fashion, they lost whatever autonomy they had, and were virtually reduced to the level of serfs. Catherine rescinded this order in 1770, but the damage was done, and after brutal Russian reprisals against dissident Cossacks, the scene was set for revolt.

*Russkiy Bunt*, from director Aleksandr Proshkin, is an extremely powerful film showing the brutality on both sides, the battle at the Orenburg Fort, and the excesses of the so-called enlightened despot Catherine the Great. We all know what happened to the Russian monarchy, and the film sets the stage for the 1917 revolution that ended more than 300 years of Romanov rule. When captured, caged, and sent to trial, Pugachev tells his accusers that he is just "the fledgling" but that the Raven and the final revolt is on the horizon. A raven also appears in the beginning of the film and disturbs a gathering of Catherine and her nobles. This intrusion of nature into the world of artificiality is an omen of Pugachev's Rebellion but also a foreshadowing of the Rus-

sian Revolution. Avrich argues that while Pushkin attributes this prophecy of The Raven and the final, triumphant, revolution to Pugachev, it is more likely that the statement was one of the legends that circulated after Pugachev's death. At the same time, even if this is just legend, and even if Pugachev didn't actually prophesy the downfall of the Russian monarchy, Avrich makes the point that Makhno was legitimized by this legend when he was seen as the "great liberator whose coming had been prophesied by Pugachev in his dying moments" (272).

While *Russkiy Bunt* is a historical epic that recreates events in the eighteenth century, the film has relevance for today's audience. The lavishness of Catherine's court seems an alien world when compared to the far-flung reaches of the Russian Empire inhabited by Cossacks, and these very different cultures clash over the issues raised by the expansion of the state. The Cossacks tried to escape incorporation into the state system by moving east, but then they could move no further. Catherine was viewed favorably as an agent of modernism by the intellectuals of her time. Similarly, the March of Civilization continues today through globalization--another mechanism of modernism.

A short synopsis of earlier Cossack rebellions and the political situation at the time would add a great deal to the film, and this could have been achieved fairly simply with a brief opening voice-over statement. As with many Russian films, the subtitles are problematic at times, but the shortcomings of the subtitles do not detract from either enjoyment or understanding of this colorful spectacle. The film also boasts a fantastic soundtrack – at once stirring and off-kilter, emphasizing the madness of the



fickle few ruling the unhappy many. Catherine maintained an energetic correspondence with Voltaire and professed belief in the Enlightenment even while she subjugated the serfs to worsening degradations and medieval punishments, including the slitting of nostrils, the liberal use of the knout, and the shipping to Siberia (at government expense) of any peasants selected by noblemen for punishment. This is a film of jarring contrasts in its examination of the collision of the vastly different social worlds of the Russians and the Cossacks and also of the incongruity of a Gallicized, German princess running amok while ruling Russia largely from her boudoir.

# DEBORD'S *KRIEGSPIEL* IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE



by Simurgh

*As far as the modern art of war is concerned, it has been completely developed by Napoleon ... there remains no other course than to imitate Napoleon as far as conditions allow.*

Friedrich Engels, "Conditions and Prospects of a War of the Holy Alliance Against France in 1852"

For those without facility in reading French, a glimpse of the Game of War (*Le Jeu de la Guerre* or *Kriegspiel*) appeared in Len Bracken's biography of Guy Debord (1997), which presented the rules of *kriegspiel* as an appendix; unfortunately it contained inaccuracies producing a confusion that undermined the playability of the game. Prospective players also had to be enterprising enough to construct their own equipment based on the graphic materials in the appendix. Several years later the *Anarchy* magazine collective produced a version as a board game that made life for the *kriegspiel* player somewhat easier, though the accompanying rulebook had to rely on the incomplete and flawed Bracken translation. *A Game of War*, Donald Nicholson-Smith's translation of *Le Jeu de la Guerre*, comes as a boxed set including not only the book but also a cardboard version of the game that can be readily assembled. And following quickly on this, Alexander Galloway's Radical Software Group (RSG) introduced a free on-line version. Since the published version is not cheap, devotees and the curious are more likely to be playing the RSG computer version, which is still in its buggy beta stages. The latest news about it, accompanied by a flurry of commentary in the "blogosphere," concerns Alice Becker-Ho's cease-and-desist order against Galloway to uphold an "intellectual property" distinctly out of character with a revolutionary vision. As strategy game players, soldiers, politicians, and lawyers can attest, a threat is often stronger than its execution. Madame Debord's threat to sue is, if nothing else, augmenting the attention the game has thus far received.

In a brief essay and commentary on the RSG *kriegspiel* website, Stephen Kelly points out several errors in the translated texts (both Nicholson-Smith's and Bracken's), some of which were faithfully reproduced from errors in the original French text. Galloway has taken Kelly's counsel and made changes to the on-line game. Some of the errors in the original book are uncorrectable because they involve illegal moves that were played in the demonstration game itself. These corrections and comments, which should be closely scrutinized by anyone making a serious effort to play the game, may help to clear up

the confusion hitherto concerning the rules of *kriegspiel*, some of which is the responsibility of Debord and Becker-Ho themselves. It seems odd, considering the time and care that Debord devoted to this game and the importance he ascribed to it, that he would have chosen such an error-riddled example game to illustrate his concept. Presumably several, or many, games of *kriegspiel* were played between Debord and Becker-Ho or other associates, and it would not have been too great a bother to record and choose a better example.

Where did the idea for this game come from? Debord conceived of it as far back as the 1950s, many years before producing it as a limited-edition game and a set of published rules in 1977 through his Society for Strategic and Historical Games developed with the assistance of Gérard Lebovici. According to Becker-Ho, a naval wargame, the rules of which are no longer extant, was also produced. The game of war was a natural extension of Debord's keen study of war itself, particularly the Napoleonic era, which gave birth to the modern understanding of war as analyzed by Carl von Clausewitz. The original *Kriegsspiel* (with a second *s* — the correct form in German) was a product of the Napoleonic wars and was invented in the midst of them, in Clausewitz's very milieu — the Prussian army.

There arises an unavoidable comparison between *kriegspiel* and chess, to which Debord himself calls attention in quoting the opening words of the 1527 poem *Schaccia Ludus* (The Game of Chess) by Marcus Hieronymus Vida, Bishop of Alba: *Ludimus effigiem belli* — "What we play is a representation [image, effigy] of

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OF IT."

war.” Debord comments that these words “might be applied even more pertinently to our board-game”(9). In other words, the virtue of *kriegspiel* and its supposed advantage over chess lies in its greater verisimilitude as a representation of war. Debord added tellingly that he wanted to imitate poker — “not the chance factor in poker, but the combat that is so characteristic of it”(156). This combat element of poker involves hidden information, a characteristic of other card games such as contract bridge. And this points to limitations in the Game of War, concerning what Debord acknowledged as “under-represented or absent factors”(24-26). Only in the opening array is the location of forces unknown to the opponent; after that phase the location of pieces in Debordian *kriegspiel* becomes transparent, as is the case in chess. In other words, it reverts to a game of “perfect information,” in the lingo of mid-twentieth century game theory. It is precisely the umpire-mediated, hidden-information factor (meant to approximate in some way Clausewitz’s “fog of war”) that has been the key feature of historical *kriegspiel* games, and the one that separates them most clearly from Debord’s version.

The scientific revolutions of the early modern period (the “Age of Reason”) brought advances in cartography, mathematics, and weaponry that produced great changes in the way armies were organized and wars were fought. Bands of knights and mercenaries serving local lords had characterized war in the Middle Ages, but now armies came under the control of centralized states and were vastly more organized and disciplined. Various attempts were made to produce wargames meant as serious training exercises for officers (these games were never meant for the common soldiers). These efforts were usually based on chess. The first notable example was the “King’s Game,” or *Grosses Königsspiel*, invented in the seventeenth century by Christopher Weikmann. This game was a form of military chess, or war chess, with 30 pieces a side, on a board of nearly 700 squares, for as many as eight players. Christoph Helwig, master of pages to the Duke of Brunswick (and also an entomologist), invented an elaborate military game in 1780 that featured a field of 1,666 multicolored squares representing different kinds of terrain, with hundreds of playing pieces (hussars, grenadiers, field artillery, mortars, etc.)



It also introduced a third player into the game as director, or umpire. More elaborate still was *Neues Kriegsspiel*, a game system invented about 1800 by Georg Venturni, with a manual running to 60 pages called *Rules for a New Wargame for the Use of Military Schools*. This system, which its inventor insisted not be called a game, imposed a grid of squares over a map of the Franco-Flemish border over which players deployed an army of 2,500 infantry, cavalry, and artillery units along with supply wagons, bridges, forts, and so forth. This one especially must have taken forever to play. In addition to



these chess-like games from Germanic lands, there were in France card games used for military training purposes: one of them was called (what else?) *Le Jeu de la Guerre*, and the other, *Le Jeu de la Fortification*.

The early forms of military chess gained a few adherents and spread to Austria, France, and other countries, but ultimately did not last, primarily because they were too unwieldy and complicated. Military theorists felt a growing dissatisfaction with chess as a model for modern scientific war. If chess were a war, it was simultaneously

anachronistic (because based on ancient and/or medieval warfare) and a kind of fairy-tale conflict of perfect symmetry and chivalry, in which there were no secrets. Moreover, it was entwined with a range of cultural aspects, so that it was never entirely about war. What was wanted



was something that went beyond chess, updating it through attention to scientific and technological concepts that were transforming the practice of war. The experiments culminating in the modern *kriegsspiel* represented a progressive distillation of the war element in chess, and even a crude form of “information technology.”

The key historical event that catalyzed the development of *kriegsspiel* was the battle of Jena, in 1806, when a Prussian army of 120,000 men was completely routed by Napoleon’s forces. Spurred by this humiliation, the Prussians embarked on a comprehensive military reform in the period 1808-1814. One of the architects of the reorganization, the young officer Carl von Clausewitz, who had himself been taken prisoner in the Jena campaign, began his writings on war during this period. Although a political conservative and sworn enemy of the French Revolution, Clausewitz became a convert to the Napoleonic way of war as a means of beating the emperor of France at his own game, a satisfaction he took personally in the campaign of 1812 (in the service of the Russian tsar), in the German Wars of Liberation in 1813-14, and in the battle of Waterloo. The aristocratic armies of Europe coming out of the eighteenth century operated through formalistic dogmas of protocol, close-order drill, and geometric formations in pretty uniforms. Obedience was drilled into the soldiers of these armies, but otherwise they had little to fight for. When these small professional armies confronted the mass peasant armies of revolutionary France, who were fired up with the zeal of national patriotism and who fought to annihilate their enemies and not merely outmaneuver them, they fell to pieces. Clausewitz recognized the importance of the factor of popular patriotic morale in an army, and promoted it vigorously. Another lesson Clausewitz took from Napoleon concerned the relation of political power and war, expressed in the famous and endlessly quoted observation about the continuum of war and policy. Nationalist “people’s war” turned out much deadlier than the cabinet wars of kings.

Clausewitz’s first book, *Principles of War*, a treatise written for the crown prince Friedrich, to whom he

was military tutor, appeared in 1812. In this brief work Clausewitz was influenced by Antoine-Henri Jomini, a French general who had served under Marshal Ney in Napoleon's Grande Armée. In time, however, Clausewitz became very critical of Jomini, and a famous rivalry developed between them. *On War (Vom Kriege)*, the mature work on which Clausewitz's reputation rests, is in part a critique of Jomini. Unlike Clausewitz, Jomini saw war as a "great drama" set apart from all other human endeavors, and as the province of heroes and military geniuses; the key to victory lay in cultivating and educating this elite class of commanders in scientific principles of strategy. Clausewitz's dialectical approach to military analysis was less romantic and focused on the unpredictability of war as well as its political aspects. Although Jomini fought for Napoleon, paradoxically it is the anti-Napoleonic Clausewitz who better grasped the nature of the new era of warfare. The reputation of Clausewitz, who became director of the Berlin Military Academy until his death in 1831, eventually eclipsed that of Jomini, as well as all other writers on the art of war in the modern period.

In 1811 Baron von Reisswitz, a civilian military advisor to the Prussian court, unveiled his wargame invention, played on a large sandtable with sculpted three-dimensional terrain no longer dependent on a chess-like grid of squares, and with wooden blocks representing military units (eventually replaced by miniature troops in porcelain). The king was impressed, and the game of *Kriegsspiel* became a great royal pastime. The teenage princes Friedrich and Wilhelm (the future King Friedrich Wilhelm IV and Kaiser Wilhelm I), cadets at the Berlin Military Academy, took to it with enthusiasm. Wilhelm played it with his friend the Tsarevitch Nicholas in the course of diplomatic trips between Berlin and St. Petersburg. A decade later Reisswitz's son, an officer in the artillery, made significant alterations to the *Kriegsspiel* designed to enhance its realism. Instead of a large sandtable or terrain blocks in plaster, there were now topographical maps with a scale of about eight inches to a mile, and the whole game became compact and easily portable. The two armies were now metal blocks and colored red and blue (a convention that persists to the present in wargame exercises). The players had to make decisions based on partial knowledge of what was happening; often they could not even see the opponent's armies. A third player, playing the role of omniscient umpire, knew the locations of all forces and determined the outcome of battles with the use of dice and a statistical combat results table. Reisswitz published a set of rules in 1824 in a booklet entitled *Instructions for the Representation of Tactical Maneuvers under the Guise of a Wargame*. General Karl von Muffling, chief of staff to the King of Prussia, was initially skeptical but was won

over after a demonstration, famously proclaiming, "This is not a game! This is training for war! I must recommend it to the whole army."

Soon *Kriegsspiel* had gained great popularity, despite initial opposition from older officers. It became entrenched in the Berlin Military Academy, where several *Kriegsspiel* clubs were formed. After Reisswitz's death by suicide in 1826, the game continued to spread among the officer corps, and additional modifications were made. New and more complicated mathematical formulas were used to calculate the combat results, which now included more variables. These developments made the umpire into a cross between a calculator and a judge, consulting voluminous tables of odds and ruling on legal points. The trend toward mathematical logic in umpiring and the clumsiness it entailed generated opposition, and eventually the practice of Prussian wargaming became split between "rigid" and "free" *kriegsspiel*. The "rigid" game, which continued in use for lower-level tactical exercises, remained bound to the tables of logarithms, while the "free" version, in which the umpire dispensed with the rulebook and made decisions based on his own knowledge and experience, became the high-level strategic game played by generals and colonels. The invention of the free *kriegsspiel* is attributed to Gen. Julius Verdy du Vernois, intelligence chief in the general staff of Von Moltke (the Elder) during the Franco-Prussian War.

Prussian victories over Austria (1866) and France (1870), accompanied by the inauguration of a unified and rapidly industrializing German empire, made other states take notice. France was no longer the great model to follow, as Prussian influence became the new standard in military circles everywhere. And the *Kriegsspiel*, which up to this point had been confined to the German military, was studied and adopted by the armies of every other great power old and new, including Britain, France, the United States, and Japan. In 1882 Maj. William R. Livermore introduced the practice to the US army with "The American *Kriegsspiel*, A Game for Practicing the Art of War on a Topographical Map." Lieutenant William M. Little initiated a naval version of the game at the US Naval War College in 1887, and wargaming became well established in that institution.

By the end of the nineteenth century the great powers had armed themselves to the teeth against one another, but the main exercises of arms were colonial "small wars" in Africa and Asia against technologically much weaker foes. The growing militarism of the imperialist era influenced the mass popular culture, which, having grown accustomed to a long peace in Europe, was naive about the reality of modern warfare. Contemporary conflicts such as the Boer War spawned a number of commercial

board games. At this time also the *kriegspiel* double-blind concept was imported back into the game of chess from which it had evolved. In Henry M. Temple's 1898 invention, also called *kriegspiel*, three boards are used, one for each of the players, who cannot see the opponent's pieces or moves, and a third for the umpire, who sees all pieces and announces which moves are legal. This variant became a hit at the London chess club where it was first played, and still has its devotees around the world.

Toy soldiers were also increasingly popular in the second half of the nineteenth century, and it wasn't just boys (princelings or not) who played with them. In Britain especially there was a vogue among adult men for collecting and playing with toy soldiers. Several famous literary figures as well as politicians including Robert Louis Stevenson, H. G. Wells, and Winston Churchill were toy-soldier hobbyists. The influence of military wargaming, which had become common in the British

army, found its way into the late Victorian and Edwardian intelligentsia's world of toy-soldier mania and was expressed in homemade versions of *kriegspiel*. Wells and his colleagues, including members of Parliament, played miniature war games on floors and lawns with cities, forts, and railways made of paper or other improvised materials. Their armies included metal soldiers and tiny spring-loaded cannons for mowing them down. Wells wrote two short books, *Floor Wars* and *Little Wars*, about these games. *Little Wars* was intended for both children and adults, as its subtitle makes clear: "a game for boys of twelve years of age to one hundred and fifty and for that more intelligent sort of girl who likes boys' games and books." Included were detailed rules for combat and a description of a sample game called the "Battle of Hook's Farm," fought between the Red Army and the Blue Army. It also has an appendix criticizing the dead earnestness of military wargaming:



They [military officers of Wells's acquaintance] tell me — what I have already a little suspected — that *Kriegspiel*, as it is played in the British Army, is a very dull and unsatisfactory exercise, lacking in realism, in stir and the unexpected, obsessed by the umpire at every turn, and of very doubtful value in waking up the imagination, which should be its chief function.

He went on to suggest that “a *Kriegspiel* of real educational value for junior officers may be developed out of the amusing methods of Little War.” (Did somebody say “Monty Python”?) The interesting thing here is that Wells, unlike many of his wargaming contemporaries, was a pacifist. In his view, Little War would replace the fighting of real wars. “You have only to play at Little Wars three or four times to realize what a blundering thing Great War must be.”

And then indeed came the Great War, for which the Germans and their opponents had prepared for years on tabletops. The opening stages, which still involved a war of massed mobility serving a Clausewitzian political aim (Von Schlieffen's plan, extensively rehearsed as a *kriegspiel*, to outmaneuver the French army by marching through Belgium), were the last gasp of Napoleonic warfare. Once the armies were immobilized in the grip of entrenched stalemate, there was only the deadly absurdity of the war for its own sake. The national wars of the bourgeoisie had culminated in an unprecedented orgy of destruction, out of which class war reemerged with a vengeance. When this insurgency failed, smashed from within by Bolshevism and Social Democracy and from without by fascism, the stage was set for the “absolute war” Clausewitz had talked of. The Prussian army elite may have despised Hitler, but they served him well. “Moderation in war is an absurdity,” Clausewitz had pointed out, but neither he nor Napoleon had envisioned in their wildest dreams the kind of slaughter that modern war machines fueled by racial nationalism could inflict. *Kriegsspiel* continued to play an important role in the German army right through the Second World War.

Alongside *kriegspiel* the old tradition of military chess continued, with *Wehrschach* (army chess), invented in Nazi Germany in 1938 by Rudolf Kuch, and Chess-Battle, invented in the Soviet Union in 1933 by A. S. Yurgelevich. These games expanded chess to larger boards and included pieces representing aircraft, tanks, and machine guns, while retaining, in the Soviet game, the anachronism of cavalry. Compared with early examples of war chess such as Helwig's or Venturni's, however, they were relatively simple and were made for a mass constituency of players many of whom would

themselves have been soldiers, since in these cases virtually the whole of society was militarized.

After the defeat of the Third Reich, Clausewitz was out of fashion in Germany, and so were the classic *kriegspiels*, which were discontinued after World War II. Baron von Reisswitz's original equipment for the Napoleonic-era game gathered dust away from public view in the Sans Souci Palace in Potsdam, where it had first been played (and in the postwar period, located in the Soviet-controlled zone of eastern Germany).

*Kriegspiels* were also discounted in the US military, although they continued as a tradition in the navy. In World War II the US military relied on operations research and systems analysis, which involved quantitative logistical problems and did not involve much study of history. But it was in the United States that a civilian wargames hobby emerged as a consumer niche market in the 1950s, with the founding of the Avalon Hill Company by Charles S. Roberts, followed several years later by James Dunnigan's SPI (Simulations Publications, Inc.). Many of the games they produced, marketed as “adult strategy games,” were geared toward the reenactment of specific historical battles such as Waterloo, Gettysburg, and First or Second World War engagements. But there were also more abstract games such as Tactics, Nieuchess, and a generic *Kriegspiel* that incorporated selected features of professional military *kriegspiels* such as the combat results table, but used simplified maps of imaginary landscapes on which were superimposed grids of squares or, more often, hexagons. These games also included communications as an element in the strength and mobility of the contending forces, bearing at least some similarity to Debord's game.

By the late 1950s, this milieu had entered a golden age that was to continue into the 1970s as a tribe of the nerd nation, complete with its own dedicated magazines and conventions, similar to the world of SF & fantasy with which it shares a certain overlap (a tradition going back to H.G. Wells). Some of its devotees prefer the term “historical simulation” to “wargaming” in much the same way that many discriminating SF fans insist on calling it “speculative fiction” rather than “science fiction.” The more hardcore historical-sim hobbyists among them, mostly older players who don't relate to SF, refer to themselves as *grogards*, a French term meaning “grumblers,” which originally referred to Napoleon's old soldiers who knew what was going on and didn't like it, but could do nothing about it except grumble. Many of the wargame buffs were themselves (former) military guys through whose agency the commercial wargames eventually spurred renewed interest in *kriegspiels* within the US military. Computers had entered military use as early as

World War II and built up a growing presence through the cold war, when they became integral to the game theory of think-tanks such as the Rand Corporation, which were analyzing charming World War III scenarios like Mutual Assured Destruction. By the 1980s, computer versions of wargames, both in the military and in popular culture, were increasingly dominant, thanks to the personal-computer explosion, and the boardgame versions had become an ever dwindling market. The US military has been very alert to the powerful impact of interactive video games in training (eg, tank trainers and Air Force flight simulators) and as propaganda for recruitment, given the vast popularity of violent video games including many with war-as-entertainment themes.

The *grogards*, many of whom have migrated to on-line “communities” of gaming, are a testament to the enduring fascination exerted by the figure of Napoleon in the Anglo-Saxon world as well as in France. The vast majority of these guys are nothing resembling revolutionaries; their fascination with great battles of history does not extend to a desire to intervene in history themselves (unless, for some of them, it involves helping the state learn how to fight its future wars more effectively). The rise of the US wargaming milieu took place during the same period that Debord began to conceive of his own version of *kriegspiel*, but he may not have known much about it, given his ignorance of English. One clue concerning his attitude toward wargames as a mass-culture phenomenon can be gleaned from a letter of 1980 he wrote to Gérard Lebovici concerning the translation of his book into English: “Even if *kriegspiel* = *wargame* is correct ‘linguistically,’ it isn’t historically, because *kriegspiel* has connotations of ‘a serious exercise by commanders,’ but *wargame* suggests ‘an infantile little game for *cadres* [white-collar employees].”

Debord’s interest in military theory and history, combined with his Marxism, invites comparison with Engels, who was known as the “Red Clausewitz” owing to his deep knowledge of military affairs. Engels wrote extensively on contemporary military campaigns in the period from the revolutions of 1848 through the Franco-Prussian War, including such conflicts as the Crimean War, the American

Civil War, the Indian Mutiny against the British in 1857, and the French colonial war in Algeria. The early communist movement in Germany emerged alongside the movement for bourgeois democracy and tended to be conflated with it. Through the experience of 1848, and even beyond, Engels’s commitment, as a red democrat, to revolutionary national war bespoke a belief in the continuation of a necessary role for Napoleonic liberalism in a continental Europe still formally dominated by monarchical despotism. He was a selective admirer of the insurgent military feats of nationalist leaders such as Garibaldi in Italy and Kossuth in Hungary against the Habsburg empire, while disparaging similar national movements of most Slavic nations — the expression of a German nationalist strain that he (and Marx) never completely relinquished. Marx himself fantasized for a time about a revolutionary war against



tsarist Russia. The journalistic writings of Engels for the *New York Herald Tribune* and *New American Cyclopaedia* were dominated by military subjects. And his military knowledge was in part derived from practical experience, as he had briefly served in the Prussian artillery as a young man, and later fought for

the Baden army against Prussia during the revolution of 1848-49. Some salient features of the military theory of Engels included viewing war as a positive contribution to the development of the prospects for proletarian revolution (although he moved away from this view after the 1870 war and the great Commune of Paris that followed it), the theory of the Vanishing Army (a facet of the anticipated withering away of the workers’ state), and attention to the problems of insurgent or guerrilla war against stronger forces. He followed in detail the technological developments in weaponry (eg, the Mini ball, rifled muskets, ironclad warships) with their increasingly lethal effects. Perhaps this was one reason for his loss of appetite, as he grew older, for war as a school of revolution. Engels could see the devastating prospect of a general European war, whose long fuse was already lit by the 1880s through the system of rival alliance blocs and colonial ambitions.

Is Debord then the red-and-black Clausewitz? A parallel between Debord and Engels seems curious on one level because Engels, probably more than any other

single individual, was responsible for the anointing of post-Marx Marxism as a modern ideology, and could therefore be considered a principal godfather of the leftist component of the “Spectacle.” Moreover, Debord did not have a military background, nor does he comment on the military writings of Engels. It is with Marx (and, oddly, Clausewitz) that he more closely identified. The experience of the defeated revolutions of 1848 spurred Marx to call for a proletarian revolution not subordinated to bourgeois democracy as a preliminary stage. The reason was that the bourgeoisie appeared unwilling to make its own democratic revolution in 1848, preferring to come to an accommodation with the reigning aristocratic regime rather than risk unleashing an insurgent working class. In an article of 1850 Marx referred to the movement toward communism bypassing capitalist democracy as the “permanent revolution,” a term that Trotsky, with whom it has a more well known association, later picked up. Marx was not the first to employ this term, however; Proudhon had used it two years earlier in his “Toast to the Revolution” (October 1848), although Marx gave it a different meaning. Debord makes passing reference in *The Society of the Spectacle* (SoS) to the “permanent revolution” of 1848 that wasn’t. Much of the political critique of the society of the spectacle points to its origins in ideological models seeking to prolong or imitate the French Revolution, not only in its conspiratorial aspects (ie, Jacobinism into Leninism), but also in its commitment to scientific technocracy. Thesis 86 of SoS states: “All the theoretical insufficiencies of content as well as form of exposition of the *scientific* defense of the proletarian revolution can be traced to the identification of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie *from the standpoint of the revolutionary seizure of power.*” Might we also say, from the standpoint of military theory?

A necessary note of caution about the relationship of war and revolution comes from Lorraine and Fredy Perlman, compilers of the thought of “M. Velli” in *Manual for Revolutionary Leaders* (1974): “A revolutionary leader *should therefore have no other aim or thought, nor take up any other thing for his study, but war and its organization and discipline, for that is the only art that is necessary to one who commands.*” Sure enough, it is well to remember that the students of Clausewitz have included not only Engels and Debord, but also the likes of Lenin, Hitler, Mao, General Patton, Henry Kissinger, and Caspar Weinberger, among a host of other *Ubis* major and minor.

If we’re not scared off by this, then we may again consider the efficacy of using classical military theory to attempt a dialectical inversion of war between states into an anti-statist class war. Keith Sanborn suggests getting back to first principles by studying what Napoleon him-

self had to say about war. He draws attention to the critique of ideology as a common axis linking Napoleon with Marx and the Situationist International. The word *ideology* (“science of ideas”) came out of the French Revolution during its Directory phase, and drew the scorn of Napoleon, who coined the word *ideologue* to mock the proponents of scientific governance. To him, ideology was the enemy of common sense and the product of intellect divorced from everyday life. Sanborn then briefly discusses Debord’s game of war in relation to the ludic principle of the *dérive* and its reconfiguration of urban space, and *détournement* as the principal situationist weapon of contestation in the cultural sphere. Sanborn’s foil to Debord’s *kriegspiel* is the game of Risk, “an historical reflection of the global outlook of Cold War technocracy.” This judgment seems to accord too much importance to Risk; surely a better example would be Avalon Hill’s Diplomacy, the favorite board game of Henry Kissinger, no less.

Having only played through the annotated demonstration game presented in *A Game of War*, plus one or two abortive efforts to play it with friendly opponents of flesh and blood, it is difficult for me to fully judge *kriegspiel*’s qualities as a game until I can give it more time and chance. I remain so far unconvinced that it has any advantages over chess or go as an aid to independent, creative strategic thinking, or in the satisfaction it affords in play. To expect of *kriegspiel*, as Debord evidently did, that it could serve as a serious training exercise for “commanders” (masters without slaves/generals without troops?) is to place a cargo of hopes on the game that it probably cannot live up to. Despite Debord’s expansive claim that “this game accurately portrays all the factors at work in real war, and, more generally, the dialectics of all conflict”(26), the Game of War actually has more the characteristics of military chess than of a true classic *kriegspiel* (which in itself is a considerable abstraction from the reality of war). It will be interesting to see if the game takes hold, either within or beyond the “pro-revolutionary” milieu, and what kind of culture develops around it. Some of the reds in the milieu will be tempted to believe that this game is going to make brilliant strategists of them yet, while some of the greens will be tempted to dismiss it altogether. Time will tell whether it gains the glory Debord hoped for it, sinks like a stone, or passes into the hands of “cadres” and computer science geeks (some would say it already has.) If it’s a good or a great game, then it should stand on its utter uselessness, without need for didactic justification. It shouldn’t proclaim, along with Ludwig Wittgenstein, “I don’t know why we are here, but I’m pretty sure it’s not in order to enjoy ourselves.” If some of its rules or qualities seem lacking, then perhaps such players as it finds will undertake further experiments and modifications. Mean-

while, from beyond the grave, Guy-Ernest Debord is preparing a new opus: *Refutation of all judgments, full of praise or hostile, of the Game of War...*

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# SOMA

## an anarchist play therapy

by G. Ogo and Drica Dejerk

*You can learn more about a man in an hour of play, than in a year of conversation.* - Plato

Plato was not alone in thinking that, of all human activities, play can best display that which is most truthful in people. Play seems to represent human essence, evoking the child or the animal in a person, since play precedes culture and civilization, language and rationality.

Some have argued that humans distinguish themselves precisely by the manner and frequency by which they play. In *Homo Ludens*, Dutch historian Johan Huizinga argues that our impressive ingenuity and creativity is due to play, which he defines as anything done for purposes other than sheer necessity. Play

is never imposed by physical necessity or moral duty. It is never a task. It is done at leisure, during 'free time'. Only when play is a recognized cultural function – a rite, a ceremony – is it bound up with notions of obligation and duty. Here, then, we have the main characteristic of play: that it is free, is in fact freedom. (8)<sup>1</sup>

This idea was also apparent to Roberto Freire, an anarchist doctor and psychoanalyst from Brazil, who, after a lifetime spent in struggle against oppressive powers, took the play postulate to heart, and created a therapeutic practice built upon it. Calling the practice *Soma*, Freire fashioned his therapy to differ greatly from other forms of psychotherapy. Instead of relying solely on months, or even years, of conversation to understand and treat his patients, Freire realized that understanding could be achieved more effectively through group participation in physically and emotionally challenging activities, what he called "exercises." *Soma*, therefore, was created as a combination of play, response, reflection, experimentation, and challenge – everything taking place within a cohesive group setting in order to facilitate honest, independent character growth. All of this, coupled with the regular practice of *capoeira angola*, is integrated into Roberto Freire's practice.

To understand *Soma*, it is essential to understand Roberto Freire's story. Born in 1927 in São Paulo, he lived through and fought against two dictatorships, and felt the pervasive effects of oppression on his own body and throughout his life. Having come of age in a radical time and place, Freire became sympathetic to anarchism from an early age. Freire was many things in his life: doctor, psychoanalyst, anarchist militant, theater producer, novelist, magazine editor, reporter, and much more.

In April 1964, the Brazilian military carried out a coup d'état – the first of a series of right-wing coups throughout Latin America. In a matter of weeks, as a result of his activism, Freire was arrested. His house was raided in the middle of the night and he was dragged from his bed in his pajamas in front of his wife and children. He was tortured for days on end: beaten, deprived of sleep, forced to read aloud subversive articles he had published. Eventually they released him, but he would be arrested again

several times.

Freire attributed going blind later in his life to the torture he endured. One method in particular, dubbed "the telephone," caused enormous internal pressure on the eye balls: it consisted of repeatedly slamming the victim's ears at the same time. Surgeries would return his sight in one eye. By the time I met him, he always wore an eyepatch that gave him the fitting look of a pirate.

Freire recalls the years after the coup as extraordinarily difficult. Worse than the physical pain from the torture was the emotional and psychological damage inflicted by the political climate upon his community. He was forced to live underground, always on the run. He suffered through a divorce, struggled with alcoholism and feelings of immense frustration with his art and his cause.

Around 1970, he went to France for a period of decompression, and on that trip he was introduced for the first time to the works of Wilhelm Reich. The Living Theater, an American expatriate acting troupe was performing in Paris. Julian Beck, its co-director, introduced Freire to Wilhelm Reich, the dissident student of Freud who emphasized the connection between body and psyche, and who explained how the causes of emotional and psychological disturbances are to be found in authoritarian social structures.

Freire came back from the trip in France with all the major works of Reich in his possession. He returned to his private practice and for the next several years he studied Reich and other radical approaches to psychotherapy and psychiatric theories. He got together with friends from the theater – people experienced with acting training and techniques – and began to research his own radical method of therapy. This would soon coalesce into *Soma*.

Another of Freire's main inspirations and influence was Thomas Hanna's *Bodies in Revolt*. Hanna defends the theory that we are at the beginning of a human r/evolution. By revisiting the works of what he calls Somatic Philosophers (Kant, Kierkegaard, Marx, Cassirer, Camus, Merleau-Ponty, and Nietzsche) and of Somatic Scientists (Darwin, Lorenz, Freud, Reich, and Piaget), he sustained the idea that humans have, "through an enormous expenditure of aggressive energy" created a new environment "which no longer ignores man's existence and needs but which positively supports them. In return, the enormous quantities of energy released by this environment are creating a new kind of human, a cultural mutant"(8).<sup>2</sup> If in the old environment humans spent most of our energy under the urge of primary drives (physiological needs), the new environment is producing the emergence of secondary drives – precisely the ones related to play.

Proto-mutants, says Hanna, will challenge the traditional culture until they "see the destruction of much of two or three millennia of Western culture." The Industrial Revolution is a watershed in this process, but Freire, in line with Herbert Marcuse, stresses the phylogenetic information gathered by generations of struggle against the repression of instincts as

## Soma: it is the totality of what constitutes the human being...

a major force shaping  
the mutation.

Hanna lays down  
the meaning of Soma:  
it is the totality of

what constitutes the human being. It's the indivisible and non-hierarchical unity of the person's body and mind, genes and environment, emotions, memories, expectations, desires, culture, social behaviors, relationships, and actions that makes up a person at every moment. It's a holistic concept that rejects traditional dualities and dichotomies. Somatherapy, therefore, is in contrast with psychotherapies that deal only the psyche.

While other forms of psychoanalysis and therapy have incorporated forms of play into their practice, they have most often employed these games as an auxiliary tool to gain responses from children, or those patients with childlike patterns of communication and understanding. For processes geared towards grown-ups, though, none have made the act of playing such an integral part of their methodology. Roberto Freire understood that just as children may make themselves more readily available to observation and analysis when they were engrossed in play, so might adults, interacting in a playful but purposeful manner, be more available to understand themselves and their interpersonal interactions.

It makes sense that such a creation would have been developed in Brazil, a country that is not known for its rigorous intellectualism, but rather for its games and celebrations. Beyond the obvious sources of revelry, such as soccer and carnival, are the myriad of *brincadeiras* (games and plays) originating from within Brazil's popular culture. One such game in particular, *capoeira angola*, was so powerful and rich that Roberto Freire adopted it as an essential element of his anarchist therapy. *Capoeira angola* is a game of resistance and liberation. Having its roots in African rituals, in Brazil it was shaped through centuries by the resistance against slavery and oppression – it wasn't until the 1930s that *capoeira* ceased to be persecuted as a felony under Brazilian law.

When compared to other styles of *capoeira*, the *angola* style is commonly seen as the one which has best preserved the traditional elements of a unique Afro-Brazilian art form, because of its stronger emphasis on the rituals, the music, on longer games and closer, more intricate interactions between the players.<sup>3</sup> Freire decided *capoeira angola* was best suited for Soma because it is a more playful style, in which the practitioners maintain a more relaxed posture, doing movements closer to the ground, engaging the entire body more equally, and therefore offering a complete bioenergetic exercise that "massages" the players' muscular armor.<sup>4</sup> In contrast, in other styles the movements are more rigid and predominantly in the standing position.

*Capoeira angola* is a rich, ritualized game in which life lessons are represented and resolved; combat between the two players aims to reenact the struggle for freedom of move-

ment against the restrictive exertion of power from another person. The players display and improve their street smarts and cunning, as well as the ability to deal with conflicts while maintaining a light, playful spirit and positive energy. As an activity on its own, it encompasses all that Freire sought to incorporate into the practice of Soma therapy. It is a social experience, practiced in a group and played in a circle of people who, by singing and playing percussion instruments, create the energy and maintain the rhythm for the two players in the center. It is a game that incorporates aspects of theater, in which body language and expression are immanent. It enables body awareness, teaches how to keep all senses alert, exercises aggression and the ability to confront it – techniques needed in the struggle to defend oneself against repression and to affirm a free personality.

By playing *capoeira angola*, slaves in Brazil would not only prepare themselves to fight their oppressors by strengthening their bodies, but also, by reaffirming their vivacity, would reconnect with the life force that slavery and domination intended to crush. While playing it, their bodies and spirits were actually free, and that, in turn, provided the spiritual fortitude needed to continue resisting and fighting. Mestre Pastinha, one of the most respected teachers of this art, has said authoritatively of *capoeira angola*, "It's an intrigue of slaves yearning for freedom. Its principle has no method and its end is inconceivable even for the wisest *capoeirista*."<sup>5</sup>

In addition to the practice of *capoeira angola*, the methodology of Soma includes sessions conducted by a somatherapist (Freire himself or one of his students) and sessions without the presence of a somatherapist.

The sessions without the therapist, one of the unique aspects of Soma, are meant to guarantee the group's and each person's independence and responsibility for the therapeutic process. These sessions are mainly verbal and provide the opportunity for everyone to learn more about each other's life and history, to discuss the collective dynamic of the group and to further develop the therapy by sharing feedback about each person's challenges, needs, desires, and aspirations.

In contrast, the sessions conducted by the somatherapist are less verbal. They consist in the experience of exercises that Freire created and, together with *capoeira angola*, they represent the play aspect of the therapy. These sessions follow a specific structure and organization: Freire created more than 40 exercises that are organized in meaningful order and sequence. In the first stages of the therapy, the exercises have a more introductory nature; as the therapy unfolds, they will have stronger bioenergetic effects and will explore more deeply the participants' behavior and character armor.

These sessions combine the exercises, which function more like playful games, with remarks by the therapist regarding the scientific, philosophical, and political basis of Soma as well as more practical observations about the collective dynamic and each person's therapeutic process.

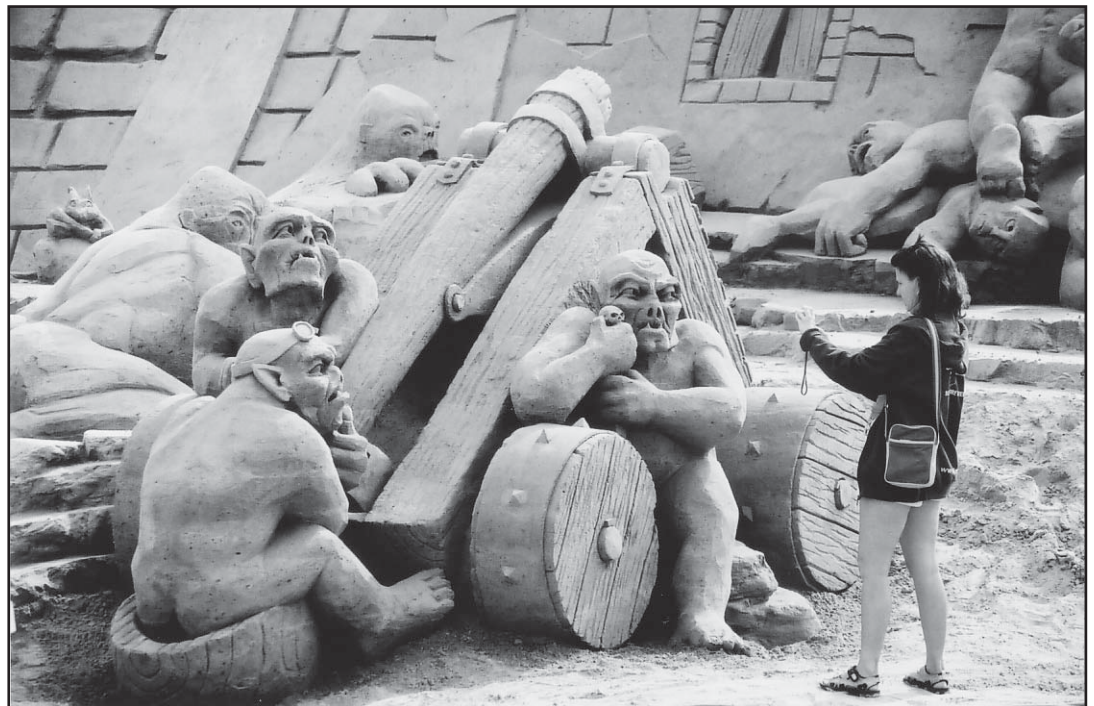
During the very first session (which has the purpose of gathering people to form a group), the therapist clarifies that Soma is a unique form of body psychotherapy that combines anarchist political content with breakthrough psychiatric theories and therapeutic methods, such as Bioenergetics, Gestalt Therapy and Anti-Psychiatry. S/he explains that Roberto Freire created Soma, and based it on the studies of Reich. Then, s/he gives a short explanation about Reich and how he shifted away from strictly verbal psychoanalysis by observing the physical manifestations of emotions on his patients. When Reich noticed defensive postures and tense bodies, he would suggest that his patient touch her body, or move in a certain way, and he would apply techniques to stimulate the relaxation of those tense muscles. By doing that, his patients would often feel some quite disturbing sensations, such as tremors, sharp pains, sweating, dizziness, nausea, vertigo, etc. Reich eventually came to understand that these sensations were produced by the release of bioelectrical streams - blocked until then by that rigidity of the muscles.

In the opening remarks, the therapist also gives practical instructions as a preparation for the exercise. For example, in the first session the therapist must ask the participants to wear minimal clothing - but before asking that, he would usually explain certain concepts that justify such a request: "Reich proved that, as with every form of energy, bioenergy can also be measured and exchanged between two bodies. In fact, as the body's external membrane, the skin is the main channel through which the bioenergetic exchange occurs. Bioelectrical variations associated with different emotional states and sensations have even been measured in the skin - this is called the *psychogalvanic reflex*. For that reason, for most Soma exercises it is better to wear light clothing and to expose the most skin area possible to facilitate bioenergetic exchange. Usually people use shorts, swimsuits, or underwear."<sup>6</sup>

These are instructions not rules, though, and each person can follow them to the limit that feels comfortable. However, part of the purpose of the exercises is to explore the barriers and inhibitions one has, and to put oneself in unusual situations for the sake of seeing her internal and external reactions, and then to perceive what feelings emerge. The goal is to learn about oneself, and the exercises were conceived to have simultaneous diagnostic and

therapeutic effects. Participants are, therefore, encouraged to give themselves to the experience and to go beyond their hesitations.

Every exercise is meant to create a certain mood and to demonstrate specific elements of the therapy. In an introductory session the exercise starts with people walking around the room in a circle. Then the therapist asks for everyone to slow the pace and, as you pass by other people, actively observe and look each person's body, up and down, from head to toe, front and back. If necessary, you should stop the person in order to take a better look at her. In this situation, some people invariably start to giggle, smile nervously, or



laugh. At this moment, the therapist interrupts to bring attention to these reactions. In a playful tone, s/he might remark: "Did you notice that as soon as I asked you to stare at each other, some people began walking towards the outside of the group; some people shyly held their arms together behind their backs. How about all the giggling, the smiling, and the laughs? Most likely, these are signs of discomfort or nervousness. I want you to pay attention to this kind of reaction coming from yourself and the others. Do not censor yourself and avoid judging if a reaction is good or bad - just acknowledge it."

The observation of this kind of reaction constitutes the most important diagnostic method of

**...it's the indivisible and non-hierarchical unity of the person's body and mind, genes and environment, emotions, memories, expectations...**

**...desires, culture, social behaviors,  
relationships, and actions that make  
up a person at every moment...**

Soma. At the end of the exercise each person has the opportunity to share with others her observations about herself and others.

Soma therapy sessions consist of three distinct parts: an activity or exercise, the Reading of that activity, and the Wrap-up. During the activity participants don't do much talking; the therapist gives instructions, lets people execute them for a short time, and then gives new instructions to move on to the next phase.

So after s/he asks people to pay attention to their reactions, s/he instructs people to continue walking in a fast pace around the room. The exercise then escalates into people intentionally bumping shoulders with one another and then with each person trying to slap other people's butts while simultaneously trying to avoid having her own butt slapped. People usually get very excited and euphoric during this part – a striking characteristic of Soma is that it's a fun and pleasant method of therapy.

The sessions include exercises for learning to trust our bodies, for understanding the connection between the body and emotions, for exploring our fears, our confidence, and learning how all this plays out in a social context. One exercise, for example, explores the idea of taking increasing risks and creating intimacy and trust within the group in order to achieve freedom and pleasure through cooperation and mutual support. It starts with a low-risk testing of boundaries and limits, gradually increasing both risk and trust. At the end, people form two lines, with everyone facing the same direction, touching shoulders with the other line. Everyone stretches their arms up, and one person is lifted at the front of the line and laid down on her back over people's flat hands. The group is asked to remain silent, no noises at all, and transfer the person, in a slow but continuous movement, towards the end of the line. One by one, each person in the group experiences this conveyor belt, completely relaxed, eyes shut, arms open and collapsed to the side. Participants are not supposed to touch the head or neck of the person being passed, and the person is instructed to relax their neck, letting their head hang back, with mouth open, and jaw relaxed. At the end, the person is carefully laid on her back on the ground.

During the Reading, people often describe their fear of falling from people's hands or how pleasant it was to have so many hands touch their backs. The Reading of the exercise follows the techniques developed by Gestalt Therapy: everyone is supposed to describe feelings, sensations, or emotions they had or the reactions they noticed in others. People are asked to avoid getting into interpretation, rationalizations, or to start making connections to unrelated experiences. They should focus on *how* it happened and not

*why*. For example, people tell about being unable to relax the neck; feeling embarrassed by taking a shirt off; by staring or being stared at; feeling excited; enjoying the entire experience; or disliking being slapped on the butt, etc.

The Wrap-up is where the therapist shares her/his knowledge and insight, tying together the different elements and aspects worked during the activity and the material brought up during the Reading. S/he also makes observations and analysis of a political nature, usually arguing how our capitalist and authoritarian society creates the emotional and psychological issues that come up during the therapy.

In the Wrap-up of the introductory exercise described above, the therapist might stress how the touching and the playfulness have an ice-breaking function, and how that foments the creation of an intimate bond between the members of the group. S/he might explain that children know how to interact in this manner instinctively, but as we grow up we tend to lose that ability by becoming inhibited, serious, or simply formal—you could meet and chat with people for years without ever feeling as connected to them as you did after such interactions. Freire was inspired by a technique called Play Therapy, in which the therapist observes children playing as a way of learning about their behavior. Soma is different, because the entire group observes and gives feedback, providing for a more diverse and rich exchange of information.

The therapist might also elaborate on the relationship between body movements and emotional and psychological states: "A lack of movement can lead to depression, with the opposite also being true. For example, if we feel bad emotionally or psychologically we may have a hard time physically supporting other people." This fact is explained by Reich's discovery that the muscular armor and the character armor are essentially the same, which also means that behavioral and emotional patterns can be affected through action on the rigidity of the body.

According to the principle of irritability, all life forms (from unicellular organisms to animals) react in similar ways to external stimuli. In general, a pleasant or beneficial stimulus, such as a favorable temperature or chemical agent, nourishment, light, etc, causes the organism to expand, whereas a negative stimulus causes the organism to contract. This mechanism is easily demonstrated in human beings: just imagine someone being scared or startled by a nearby loud explosion – you can imagine this person would immediately contract her entire body – an involuntary spasm serving as a defense mechanism. If she were healthy, she would relax again as soon as she realizes that there's no imminent danger. If she were not, or if there were perpetual bombardment of her senses or threats to her emotional environment, she may continue to retain her constricted, rigid posture.

To address this disturbance effectively, it is not enough to address the muscular armor. It is also necessary to deal with

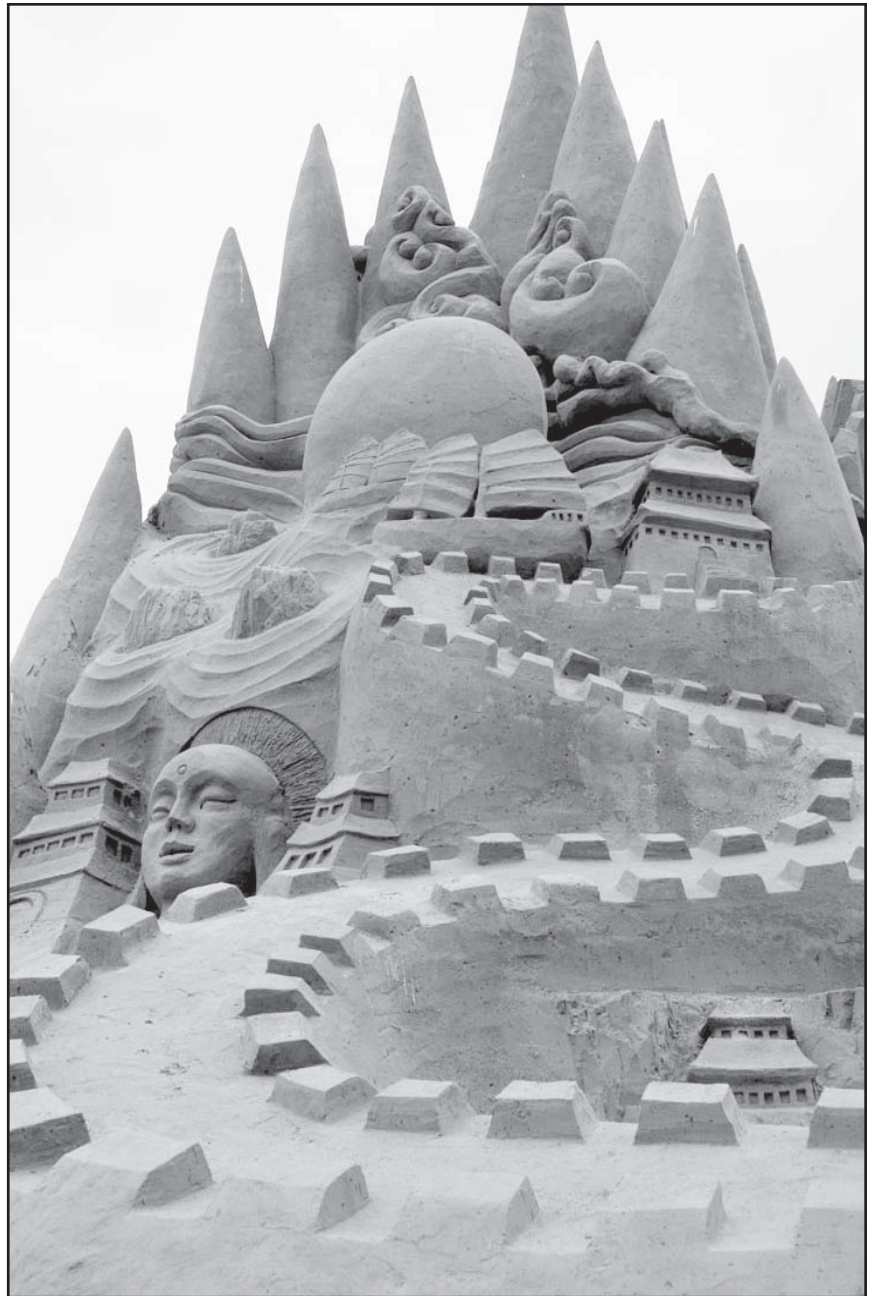
the social and political environment with which we are surrounded. While it's important to regain the ability to relax the muscular armor, one must also create environments that are favorable for this emotional self-regulation. Since capitalist society will continue attempting to subjugate us, it's also necessary to craft new forms of defense, new individual and collective strategies that do not lead to further armoring.

All of this (and more) is discussed during the Wrap-up. At the end of a year and a half – the average span of a Soma group – the lessons provided by the exercises, the Readings, the Wrap-ups and the sessions without the therapist give each person considerable knowledge about themselves and others. More than just a particular form of therapy, Soma is a rich learning experience, a skill-share, and an experiment in anarchism applied to personal dynamics – for the benefit of radicals, revolutionaries, and other free spirits.

Freire accuses psychotherapists of implicitly defending capitalist ideology by conveying a reactionary message of conformism and submission. By way of contrast, Soma is unapologetically ideological, explicitly anarchist, challenging people involved in its therapy to refuse that conformism and submission.

Freire's great insight and contribution was to integrate radical politics and breakthrough psychiatric theories into a cohesive, coherent, and effective praxis. To develop a way for real people to experience, with their entire beings, what many philosophies have attempted to convey with words. He provided a framework, a language to address emotional and personal issues in consensus-based, non-hierarchical groups to help people supersede the unconscious barriers that determine their behavior, and change it according to the ideas and ideologies they believe or profess.

...and he did it through playing games!



**...it's a holistic concept that rejects traditional dualities and dichotomies.**

#### Endnotes

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3 Frigério, Alejandro. *Capoeira: de arte negra a esporte branco*. *Revista brasileira de ciências sociais*. Rio de Janeiro, v.4, n.10. 1989

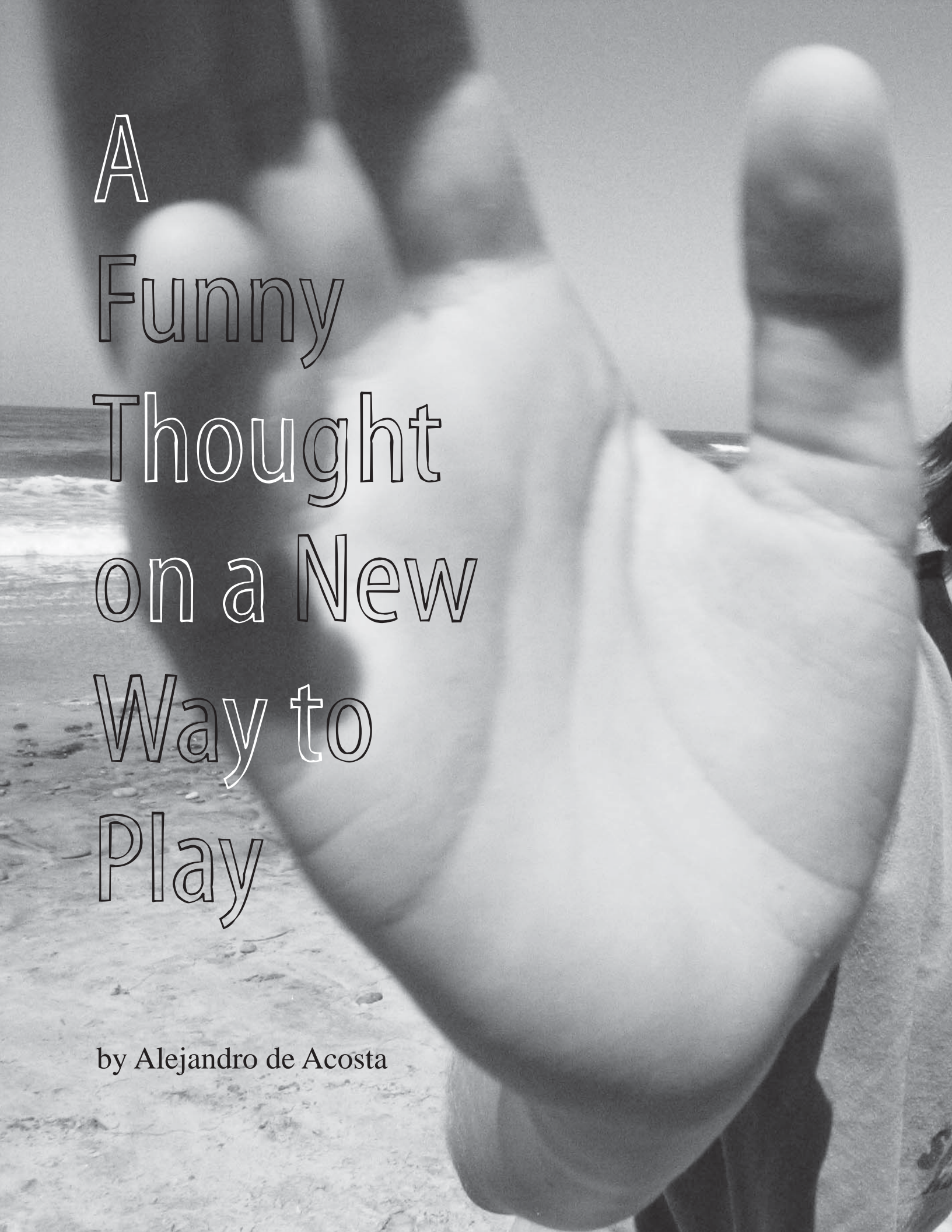
4 As postulated by Reich, the muscular armor is the chronic rigidity in the body that prevents the full circulation of the bioenergy or orgone. Reich argued that the muscular armor and the character armor are the same, meaning that behavioral and emotional patterns can be

affected through action on body rigidity and vice versa.

5 Mestre Pastinha is said to have displayed the original phrase in Portuguese at his capoeira angola school's front door:

"Mandinga de escravo em ânsia de liberdade. Seu princípio não tem método e seu fim é inconcebível ao mais sábio capoeirista."

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A black and white photograph of a hand reaching out towards the camera, with a beach and ocean in the background. The hand is in the foreground, slightly out of focus, with fingers spread. The background shows a sandy beach and the ocean under a bright sky.

# A Funny Thought on a New Way to Play

by Alejandro de Acosta

## 7

I am already playing. And I don't tend to like games. At least I don't like games in which I don't get to participate in inventing or discovering the rules. What I do like, however, is finding games where and when games are said not to be. My desire is to keep playing this game of truth – and you are invited to play along.

Suppose that we are already playing (I, in writing this; you, in reading it) and that in realizing it we come to admit that in some way everything is a game – everything personal, everything social, and everything cultural, anyway, including what seems least playful: work, or struggle, for example.

Suppose again that we go on (or realize we can't stop) playing and allow ourselves to discover or invent the conceit that there are games in nature, too, something like a grand cosmic game that interminably bleeds into whatever we might have thought intimate and social life involve. Or could involve, from the most forgettable and trivial exchanges to the cruelest acts. The interest or desire of this bleed is that it colors just those relations that so many of us are usually inclined – and often trained or forced – to conceive of and live out as rule-bound and competitive. Including self-relations. And this within an imagination where rules are not negotiable, but accepted all at once out of duty or the responsibility of so-called fair play (a kind of morality, or at least good practice for moral behavior). Increased exposure to the cosmic game could change all of that. Do these suppositions sound sufficiently inviting? We could begin with how we live out the rules and competitions that seem most trivial – those of discrete, ordinary games – I mean, what we usually think of as games.

## 2

The play of discrete or ordinary games is the privileged object of the theories of writers such as the historian Huizinga; these theories make play and games the oldest and most basic stratum of human life. I am fascinated by such theories. The idea is to some extent just beautiful: play as a “voluntary activity,” “older than culture,”

that “has nothing to do with necessity or utility, duty or truth.”<sup>1</sup> Though it is an originary stratum, Huizinga does his best not to present this as an evolution: “... we do not mean that play turns into culture, rather that in its earliest phases culture has the play-character, that it proceeds in the shape and in the mood of play” (46). For those of us who like to play at speculative anthropology, especially the speculative anthropology of what is called prehistory, there is much to be excited about here. At the same time, whatever the fascination that such arguments exert on us, they should arouse suspicion as well. It all has to do with how (or by whom) play and games are imagined. Huizinga (but it is not just him, obviously) always describes play as part of a game; he always describes the game as discrete (which seems to come down to being governed by rules); and he always describes the discrete game as a contest or at least the “representation of a contest” (13): That is, it is competitive.<sup>2</sup> It is, predictably enough (according to him), the competitive aspect of games that eventually and repeatedly gives birth to cultures or civilization.

Reading Huizinga, one might disappointedly conclude that his conception of play as games and of games as rule-bound and competitive is far too narrow. Painfully so. But this poverty of perspective can be interesting if we ask ourselves how it might have come about, what sort of attitude it bespeaks. In this sense the root of the problem might be that to accept that play and games compose the base stratum of culture involves entirely too much seriousness. This would be descended from or instantiated as the seriousness, one imagines, of the contest. Given that he repeatedly states that “play is the direct opposite of seriousness” (5), one might conclude that he did not think he was playing when he wrote the book.<sup>3</sup> He instead seems to be in the grips, precisely, of a seriousness that divides what is and what is not (play, for starters). For me this is something like the seriousness that Stirner once linked with what he called possession: “there is nothing more serious than a lunatic when he comes to the central point of his lunacy; then his great earnestness incapacitates him for taking a joke.”<sup>4</sup>

These things unfortunately seem to go together: the

seriousness of the thesis (of proposing, sometimes, but especially of maintaining or defending a thesis, that “central point” of one’s “lunacy”), and the rules one endlessly discovers once one sets out in search of them. Whether or not and to what extent the rules are fully known is a matter of power, or what seems to be power – and the search for rules is a competitive move, an attempt at a coup in the game, the unmentionable intellectual game: the contest of the thesis and of rules. Huizinga makes play the origin of civilization and cultures, but not the totality of them, not their very practice, and certainly not their end point, because he was, or at least thought he had to sound, serious. He might have thought, more or less consciously, that he had to repeat the same transition from game through contest to cultural or civilized institutions that he hypothesized. To do this, he had to imagine play in the form of discrete, competitive games with specific sets of rules.

For Huizinga, it seems, play and games can be an at least chronological origin of culture, but only as preparations, only as experiments concerning the next stages, the official seriousness and misery of which is all too familiar to some of us. Playing games and freely (arbitrarily, even) accepting their rules and competitions in the name of play slides all too arbitrarily (freely, even) into not freely accepting rules (and everything that game rules might, according to Huizinga, be practice for: innumerable conventions, customs, moral codes, laws) in the name of Society, or of Normality, or, if one thinks too much like a certain unhappy sort of social scientist, the structures and functions of cultures and social life, with all of their explicit and implicit formulations. A culture and its taboos. A state and its laws. A language and its grammar. Et cetera.

It seems to me that some procedure like this extends from our engagement in apparently discrete, rule-bound, and competitive games to most or even all of our intimate and social relations, manifest as our more or less spontaneous apprehension of life as rule- or law-bound. (This is going too fast, I know, but that’s the game I am playing). The interest of proposals like Huizinga’s is that, used otherwise, they suggest a situational, everyday model

for how one makes the supposedly spontaneous larger assumption of the two. One begins (but this is rarely a beginning! – it is usually a repetition) to play a discrete game. Think of the invocation of society or cultures, for example, as an agent of some sort, not to speak of morality, nation, religion! Thanks to such an imaginary model we might come to see practically any thing, process, or abstraction as an imaginary agent: a Fate, a God, a Cause, demanding respect and inspiring hope and fear, each so harmful in its own way. I am referring first and foremost to the ordinary, colloquial use of these words, but also to how we are bound by what we unconsciously suppose that they involve. They are in some sense modeled, I will playfully propose, on our engagement with the apparently discrete, rule-bound, and competitive games, and not the other way around!

It might then be an occupational hazard of those who write on play and games that they do not sound either playful or gaming. I include myself in this, of course; and if I hope to overcome this obstacle, it is not by being funny (at least not on purpose), but rather by being parodic, paradoxical and occasionally nonsensical.

### 3

Some years after Huizinga, the philosopher Deleuze, playing his way out of what was known as structuralism, wrote a fine text on play and games, inspired by Lewis Carroll. What I have been calling discrete or ordinary games, Deleuze dubbed Normal Games, suggesting that they are “mixed” – they involve chance, of course, but “only at certain points”; the rest of their play (?) “refers to another type of activity, labor, or morality.”<sup>5</sup> We can think of social activities as games, à la Huizinga, only because we think of games in the restricted, “mixed” economy of Normal Games that involve the acceptance of rules and a possible competition. That is, normal games always refer their play to a norm that is taken to be serious, outside of the play-sphere. Otherwise there seems to be no game. Without games, no society, no culture – and, maybe then, no self?

The alternative to this ought to sound nonsensical.

To the seriousness of the thesis and its contest one might propose an alternative, a whimsical or funny thought (*drôle de pensée*, as Leibniz once wrote) that takes on the play of the world<sup>6</sup> as its uncommon perspective, as its excessive subjectivity, playing at but never seriously claiming the reality of an infinite play-world

(as opposed, for example, to the necessarily finite work-world often invoked by those fascinated by terms such as scarcity or production).

The Ideal Game is Deleuze's name for this funny thought of the cosmic game or the play of the world. It has no rules and is entirely too chaotic to allow for any skillful use of chance (meaning the mechanical consequences of well-executed moves). Every Normal Game flirts with chance to some degree or another, and plays, Deleuze wrote, at mastering it. And if one is serious one might think one has. All too often that desire for mastery, which bears ultimately on one's intimate relation to the macrocosm (but is rarely – if ever – consciously felt as such) collapses into the specialized microfascism of so many games, into an obsessive clinging to the rules, the little cruelties of competition, and (more interestingly) what is called cheating.<sup>7</sup>

My problem with Deleuze's version of the Ideal Game is that he states, first of all, that it can't be played "by either man or God." Worse, "it would amuse no one" (*Logic*, 60). He writes that, ultimately, "it can only be thought



as nonsense." I wonder why this did not suggest another idea of play and of amusement, such that, not negating but simply and nonsensically contradicting the first two claims, the Ideal Game can't but be played by people and Gods (if any); and it not only amuses everyone but is precisely the Amusing as such!

All of this matters if one wants to take a position. In some sense, I do. To begin with, I want to reveal as games activities that do not appear to be games, complicating or even dissolving the distinction between discrete play-spheres and the supposedly serious worlds of culture. Eventually, I want to open up all apparently discrete games, acknowledged and unacknowledged, to the Ideal Game. But whereas the first move has to do with revealing what is rule-bound but does not appear to be so, the second, the opening to the Ideal Game, dissolves all of these apparent and more or less concealed rules in a grand chaotic complication that shows all of them as arbitrary. In all this I want to expand and intensify the spheres of play. But I want to play my way into that position, and so I know I will have to playfully abandon it now and then, lest it

What I would like to  
expand is precisely  
what is most  
interesting about play:  
the opportunities  
to study one's own  
stupidities and desires  
for humiliation, and  
the opportunities  
for virtuosity.

become the central  
point of a lunacy I  
prefer to avoid.

## 4

I don't want it  
to seem as though  
I am blaming the  
problem of the im-  
poverished imagi-  
nation of play I have  
diagnosed in Huiz-  
inga on the serious-

ness of professors alone. Really, there is no one to blame, unless we want to engage in the superstitious invocation of imaginary agents: "Society tells us that play..." "Our culture says that games ..." So many ways of inverting the vital flow, making play depend on seriousness and not the other way around! Almost everyone I have spoken with about what I am writing about games responds that it seems that to them, too, that a game is always or at least typically rule-bound and competitive:

*Rule-bound* The assumption that play involves accepting a certain set of dictates, oral or written, that govern the activity, defining its beginning and end as well as all possible or available moves, and delimiting the space and time of play.

*Competitive* The assumption that one should engage the rules in such a way as to use skill or chance to best one or more opponents. (Though one might immediately ask if one can ever use chance, or is better said to be used by it).

In both of these aspects we might be able to discern how games are mixed (in Deleuze's sense), referring to other activities whose rules are hidden or all too obvious, but

which are in either case not usually conceived as games. This is the secret morality of play.

If it is our whim to open the idea of games in other directions, we could, first of all, explore the ambiguities in these two aspects. We can likely summon up at least a few memories of solitary play,<sup>8</sup> or of play involving optional or variable rules, or of collaboration or co-operation that appear beside or as part of competition. True, it might be argued that these are only subjective or experiential aspects of play. But that is precisely what is most important here, since it seems to me that to assume games are by definition rule-bound and competitive itself derives from conceiving and practicing them as discrete. That conception, that practice, comprise an attitude, or a series of attitudes. And that is, by most definitions, subjective. An attitude that refuses the assumption that games are always discrete leads, first, to affirming any perspective that allows itself the conceit of acting in a given situation as if it were a game. Dwelling sufficiently within this perspective might ultimately lead to the realm of play and games beyond rules and competition, to the Ideal Game. Inevitably, the Ideal Game involves a subjective (or even existential – why not?) dimension: the feeling of the game as opening onto life or the cosmos, the sense of their tendential coincidence. This feeling, the anticipation or mere possibility of this feeling, might be why some of us bother with supposedly discrete games at all.

Sadly, it seems that a more common reason to play Normal Games is to practice our superstitions. I am thinking first and foremost of the superstition that competition matters at all. But I am also thinking of what does not appear to be a game, that which we are invited or forced to take seriously. So often being serious amounts to being superstitious! As a philosopher, I know this well: how many times, in how many conversations, have I asked myself if my interlocutor is (superstitiously) certain of being right, or playing at the game of acting, speaking, as though he is right?<sup>9</sup> Of course I am not invoking any sort of cosmic truth beyond the play of the world, truth beyond the game that plays at being right. Why would I, if my desire is to keep playing, to play the game of truth, among other games?

## 5

I propose an interpretation of one discrete game, Tag, which opens onto a speculative anthropology. In this game, It comes to any given player from outside. Or at least so it seems. To be tagged, to be It, is to be marked. To bear the mark, however temporarily, is to be treated as someone or something else than the play-group. The tag, the temporary position of being It, has to do with otherness. Tag is the game of us and not-us. It is always an other-than-us that circulates. Perhaps Tag is the game of a group's self-understanding, so that It is always a position that is sacrificial or sacred, above or below the group. Whatever It is has a special accursed power, and always has to be avoided, denied, warded off. For its part, It approaches us, chases us, lures us, traps us, and, if it is lucky, infects us, passing It on. So Tag could be a game of persecution; but at the same time, it could be a game that valorizes or grants power to what is persecuted. That is why it is so easy to interpret Tag as a liberatory game (it teaches how to avoid the one who tries to assume power, as well as how easily this position can circulate). That is also why it is so easy to interpret Tag as an oppressive game (it teaches ostracism, xenophobia, scapegoating, etc).

I chose Tag because it is characteristic of a number of children's games that have very simple (and often modified) rules, and that are transmitted orally. Such games are likely very ancient. If we playfully suppose that this game belongs to an anonymous and interminable childhood of humanity, there is room to wonder at what it reveals beyond its function as a Normal Game (there is room to ask if certain children's games, those that are truly of children and not imposed on them, are ever normal). If we playfully assume that Tag is an ancient game, passed down orally since prehistoric times, it could be part of how the

distinctions between kin groups, tribes, and ultimately humans and animals, or humans and spirits, might have originally been distributed. Maybe Tag is the explicit form of an utterly common, nearly universal game of inclusion-exclusion, communication-persecution that shapes, playfully and not structurally, countless groups, communities, and cultures. That some games, like Tag, are considered to be for children, or to embody the childish in whoever plays, suggests that games, as passing manifestations of play, are endlessly codified and controlled through the recording and imposition of rules that seem to subordinate



play, and especially what in play is healthy and vital, to set rules and competition. Adherence to rules and enthusiasm about competition can often save one from being regarded as childish. Competition reinstates, or at least gives folks ground to reinstate, seriousness. This is the value of Huizinga's proposal that games are the beginning of culture and civilization. And superstition? Consider these common malaises:

that by following the rules I might be lucky enough to conquer Fate (fortune), or appease the gods (this is the ancient model: chance as Fortune or the gods)

that I can get the better of Fate by means of whatever makes me lucky: joining the victorious Cause and genuinely or disingenuously working for it (this is the modern – at least Euromodern – model: the enlightened gamble of the average democratic citizen).

Such superstitions, whatever kind of psychic or social genesis they have, seem to suppress timelessly healthy thoughts such as:

our superstitions, however inevitable, are of  
no real help

all of life is a game and has no set rules.

Tag is the game that, in its play, celebrates the circulation of the object, the thing, and the subject, the self. It, the thing, the mark, is what makes the game go. In this sense the game playfully inverts the world that a certain common sense suggests we live in – a world in which the subjects or selves make it go. When we seriously distinguish thing and self, or, at another level, who is and who is not in our tribe or group, we are playing at some variant of this game. The difference is that the playful (childish) version and the serious (adult) version are focused on different questions. The latter wants to know: “who is It?” The former: “how does It circulate?” In the childish version, the otherness of It, whatever it is called upon to designate, sacred or sacrificial, circulates: it could be any of us. If It is the enemy, this position circulates endlessly. I say endlessly because at least the common version of the game has no set end. But this raises the question of how the game begins: does It really come from outside? How (or by whom) is it decided who is It at the beginning? It might be arbitrary – or only seem so. Isn’t there always a list of usual suspects?

It is possible that in games like Tag an archaic stratum of the life of the first humans continues to be passed on, even as they continue to be identified with children as a kind of official outside, maintained, at least in modernity,

through the child/adult distinction. But this is also perhaps a response to the persistence of this stratum. It seems that there is power and resistance in this transmission. But why invoke a historical transmission at all? It depends on how we think of or live out our history. If history obeys rules or has a pattern, an order (stages, even), a telos (progress, even), then the codification of its rules is desirable. If it doesn’t, if we think of or live out history as another way of grasping the chaos of the Ideal Game, then, to us, what we do with games is analogous to what we do with rules, laws, studies of rules, studies of laws: we grasp them as one form or another of a superstition concerning one form or another of victory, mastery, winning. Such are the stakes of the procedure I referred to earlier: rather than conceiving of play and games as the origin of and practice for culture as a historical affair, a chronological procession, we might instead imagine and practice them as the ever repeated, ever interruptible beginning of whatever in culture (and thus in history) appears to be all too serious.

## 6

*“Do you propose, then, to do away with games?”*

No, of course not. How could we, anyway?

*“With Normal Games?”*

No, not exactly. This funny thought concerns how they are played. Wouldn’t one always want to be careful of the moment where one assumes whatever rules to be one’s own? When one entered that ambiance or milieu?

*“To always invoke the Ideal Game?”*

Sort of. But who would want to speak in the name of the Ideal Game, anyway? To render it divine?

The virtue, presumably, in all this would not be to come to see Normal Games as less desirable (that is a matter of taste) – but to recognize, to get better at recognizing, situations in which one is invited or forced to compete seriously, in which competition seems necessary for play. It has more to do with the ability or attitude that recognizes a potential game in whatever is supposed to be serious – where rules, codes, laws (etc) appear without explicit reference to the element of chance. Where the chance element is ignored, devalued, apparently set



aside. For me this means that it is assumed, relied on, gambled on, in a very superstitious, a very dangerous way. This has everything to do with how (or by whom) a game is played, and ultimately with what is conceived or not conceived as a game.

Indeed, this might be the superior use of the Normal Game: playing in such a way as to show any number of so-called serious activities to be variants of Normal Games, in the sense that assuming the rules of Normal Games might habituate us (think again of children) to accepting rules in situations that do not seem to be games, and not assuming them in that common way opens up every Normal Game to the play of the world.

I would like to recall here the Situationists' definition of a situation, especially its invocation of a play of events. The challenge of the infamous definition is of course the tension implied in "deliberately and concretely constructing" a situation in a way that combines the play of events with the "collective organization of a unitary ambiance."<sup>10</sup>

A situation, it seems to me, is like a Normal Game, but precisely one that is programmed to be open to the Ideal Game. In this sense it is like a machine that assumes the unpredictable (should we just call it time?) as its own. Normal Games involve an attempt to master chance, which is of course macrocosmically impossible. Still, every Normal Game plays as or in the Ideal Game in some way or another, more or less gracefully. What is the interest of a match or contest where the outcome is known? A situation, in this sense, is a graceful move, a display of virtuosity, in a game of social relations. Think of it as the unlikeliest machine: "The machine to affirm chance ... the machine to release these immense forces by small, multiple manipulations, the machine to play with the stars, in short the Heraclitean fire machine."<sup>11</sup>

## 7

Another way of proposing such an attitude might begin by noting that what is interesting in the play of Normal

Games is not the endgame, the final moves, wherein something or other is decided (victory, or judgment, an entire imaginary of apocalypse that plagues would-be revolutionaries as much or more so than most others), but taking a position. Maybe rules ultimately derive or depend on this taking of a position (how one takes a position, or creates a situation), such that play is irreversibly altered. A sense of where and when one invokes not just the derivation of

All too often that desire for mastery, which bears ultimately on one's intimate relation to the macrocosm (but is rarely – if ever – consciously felt as such) collapses into the specialized microfascism of so many games, into an obsessive clinging to the rules, the little cruelties of competition, and (more interestingly) what is called cheating.

of milieu – and, given whatever space or place, there are specialists who will tell us what rules apply there. Again: a culture and its taboos. A state and its laws. A language and its grammar. Et cetera. But why place the emphasis on these, when what is vital and primary is this taking of a position, affirming where and when one is?

Almost any game can involve a vaguer, broader idea of play. So one might want to consider moves in and out of Normal Game play. First, into and out of other Normal Games, and then into and out of activities that do not yet seem to be games. Interestingly, this is easier when there

rules, but the derivation of the board, or table, or court – the delimited zone where the game imagined as the Normal Game is played. The board corresponds (this is going too fast, again!) to something like an imagination of space that defines what rules apply and how one plays. It is an imagination of ambience, of place,

is no board, physical or otherwise, and the game is a word game or gesture game, a game made up just for the occasion, whose rules are looser, as yet unformed, or explicitly variable. In this way we might be able to interpret intra-game moves as taking positions in the general economy of the Ideal Game.

In this change of attitude towards games, what I would like to expand is precisely what is most interesting about play: the opportunities to study one's own stupidities and desires for humiliation, and the opportunities for virtuosity. Of course I do not want to do away with virtuosity! (Or honor, or even glory, if those virtues can be separated from a small-minded concern with victory.) Normal Games have always been opportunities to develop and display some bizarre virtuosity; for my part, I want to develop the bizarre as opportunity. I think here in passing of the novel and affirmative sense given to competition by Fourier. But I also must include the spoilsport's gesture, the nonsensical refusal to play a game, as in the anecdote Huizinga relates about a certain Shah of Persia, "supposed to have declined the pleasure of attending a race meeting, saying that he knew very well that one horse runs faster than another" (49). Huizinga comments: "From his point of view he was perfectly right: he refused to take part in a play-sphere that was alien to him, preferring to remain outside." In any case, true virtuosity would be to open up the Normal Game to that outside, which I have been calling the Ideal Game. If one wants to compete (and, undeniably, some of us do) they might try competing with nature.

Competing with nature? A move in a game is defined (or at least definable) in terms of game rules – but is at the same time the index of a position, a temporary arrangement or disposition in one or more broader and fuzzier spheres of play. Those fuzzy spheres are interminable, infinite. The extent to which we conceive them as bounded reflects exactly to what extent we more or less consciously conceive of nature or cosmos as bound by laws or a divine hierarchy. This is my move, my position: nature or cosmos is the outside, unbounded in every sense. Which is perhaps how, playfully, we might

have come to admit that nature also – and eminently – plays games. But if that kind of language is too abstract, turn to your lover and say, “this is a game.” Turn to your parents or children and say, “this is a game.” Turn to your friends and enemies and say, “this is a game.” Say silently to your self and any imaginary entities you discover in solitude, “this is a game.” See what happens next.

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### Endnotes

1 *Homo Ludens*, 7, 1, 158.

2 In his summary of the “formal characteristics” of play, Huizinga lists first the rather abstract quality of play’s separateness from ordinary life; but, immediately, he moves to more concrete criteria: the boundaries of time and space and the rules that make that possible. These criteria undergird his later claim that the contest is central in games (8-13).

3 At least as I understand its overall movement. I do fear I might seem ungenerous in my criticisms, seeing as Huizinga’s argument continually undermines itself in stray remarks. For example: “Play cannot be denied. You can deny, if you like, nearly all abstractions: justice, beauty, truth, goodness, mind, God. You can deny seriousness, but not play” (3). But then why take the seriousness emergent from play so seriously? In some sense my entire essay could be taken as an attempt to vindicate some of Huizinga’s propositions against the grain of the overall movement of *Homo Ludens*.

4 *Ego and its Own*, 62. As I was writing this I recalled the idea of “playfulness” proposed by the feminist philosopher María Lugones, which



sets out precisely from a rejection of the “agonistic” focus of the theory of play in *Homo Ludens*.

5 *Logic of Sense*, 59.

6 If I can rescue this phrase from Kostas Axelos, who stressed that play should not become a new slogan, only to produce a theory of play that I regard, for reasons I won’t go into here, precisely as a philosophical dead-end characterized by vague sloganeering.

7 On this last point, Huizinga almost agrees. Discussing those he calls “spoil-sports,” he writes: “the outlaw, the revolutionary, the cabbalist or member of a secret society, indeed heretics of all kinds, are of a highly associative if not sociable disposition, and a certain element of play is prominent in all their doings” (12). *Their dissent is to play another game*.

8 It is telling that Huizinga devalues solitary play except when it can be related to some future contest (13, 47).

9 I use the male pronoun here for autobiographical reasons alone.

10 *Situationist International Anthology*, 45.

11 Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 36.

# Anarchist Media Review

Reviews this issue are by Aragorn! [A!], Clayton James [CJ]

Dot Matrix [DM], and Lawrence Jarach [LJ].

*Anarchy* does exchanges with all other anarchist and anti-state, anti-capitalist periodicals.

We try to review all such periodicals received.



**Black Flag #227**  
BM Hurricane  
London WC1N 3XX  
40 pages, £3

Just when I thought my last review of *Black Flag* (in #65) would be the penultimate word in snarky dismissal, the editors release an issue that throws my critical world into a spin. While I don't find all the content in #227 to be satisfying to my particular sensibilities, or even necessarily convincing in a generic sense, the bulk is definitely engaging, even important. From a decent analysis of how the British National Party, an extreme right wing formation, has been steadily increasing its

electoral successes both locally and nationally, to the second of a three-part series on what went wrong in the Russian Revolution, this latest issue is a vast improvement on the previous one. Perhaps that's at least partly due to the inclusion of more writers this time. Taking a cue from the Kate Sharpley Library, this issue brings some lost history to contemporary English-speaking anarchists. A brief survey of perhaps "the world's first explicitly anarchist-feminist group" (connected to the journal *La Voz de la Mujer* published in Argentina in 1896) makes for a fascinating chapter on anarchist activity. To call them "anarchist-feminist," however, seems a bit of a stretch; their attacks on marriage and male domination indeed mark them as pro-women, but the term "feminist" in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries signified a political tendency that had nothing in common with anarchism, especially for women attached to a periodical that was "dedicated to the ad-

vancement of Communist Anarchism." Feminists of that era were struggling for the right to vote and other measures of integration and assimilation into the dominant bourgeois (statist and capitalist) infrastructure, while anarchist women (like Emma Goldman, Voltairine DeCleyre, and hundreds less famous) found those goals to be distractions at best; as partisans of the revolutionary transformation of all economic and social relations, the anarchists of those days who were interested in the liberation of women from exploitation and domination *explicitly refused* the label "feminist." Speaking of Emma, a transcript of a speech she delivered in 1911 is reprinted here, possibly the second time it has appeared in print. It is her appreciative biography of Mary Wollstonecraft, an often neglected figure of 18<sup>th</sup> century political philosophy, who eventually married William Godwin, and who tragically died giving birth to their daughter, also called Mary (the companion of Shelly and the author of *Frankenstein*). Most of the photos are still too

pixelated, and the back cover is stupendously ugly, but if the quality of the content continues in this trajectory, *Black Flag*—despite editor Iain McKay's adherence to the more workerist tendency of anarchism—has the potential to live up to its namesake of the 1980s. And who would have thought that McKay would quote Max Stirner approvingly? [LJ]

**Earth First! Journal**  
May-June 2008  
POB 3023  
Tuscon AZ 85702  
32 pages, \$4.50

I've never read the *Earth First! Journal* before. I realize how important it has been in galvanizing and sustaining the environmental movement, but I never really cared about trees. I'm glad that I picked up this copy for two reasons. The first is for the report back by the People of Color (POC) Caucus. During the recent Earth First! winter rendezvous, the POC got together and talked about problems within the Earth First! movement. They noticed

that there is rampant cultural appropriation and fetishizing of indigenous cultures within Earth First! “This ranges from white people and their ‘tribal Earth rituals’ and dreadlocks, to the war cries you hear at every protest, to the wolf howls at gatherings (which also has the potential for being pretty disruptive to local wildlife patterns).” (11) I never realized that my feral cries to the full moon were actually offensive acts of appropriation. Armed with that knowl-



edge I can be a better white ally. My second reason that I’m glad I picked up the journal is that it convinced me to quit throwing my recyclables in the trash. [CJ]

## Freedom

Vol. 68 no. 23 &  
Vol. 68 no. 24  
84b Whitechapel High St.  
London E1 7QX UK  
Freedompress.org.uk  
8 pages, 80p/£41 for 24  
issues outside Europe

The interminable fortnightly from London continues to regale the English-speaking anarchist scene with its often daft content. No. 23 (1 December) has a front page essay called “Taking Stock, Moving Forward,” by one of the eight-member strong East Kent Anarchist Group making the case for a spectacular increase in size and influence of British anarchists: “Today the British anarchist movement is in [a] better position than it has been for many a year.” Aside from the missing indefinite article (and there are a few other annoying grammatical mistakes that could have been easily corrected had anyone taken the time to read it before print-

ing it), such a statement is bound to raise a few eyebrows. The proof? “*Black Flag* magazine has reappeared”; *Freedom* is “stronger and better”; there were “a record number of stalls at this year’s London Anarchist Bookfair”; more meetings(!); more “serious” books on anarchism from academics; and the hilariously self-important website Libcom “has over

2,500 registered users.” The author smugly compares this increase to the crisis of the British authoritarian left, but then questions why “there has not been an obvious single reason” for the corresponding supposed growth of the anti-authoritarian left. The intrepid author then goes on to lament the poor circulation of *Freedom*, which hovers at around 500 (presumably non-subscription sales), then issues a less-than-rousing call for people to hawk it at demos. More, he avers that “If we are serious about the movement growing, then making sure that it’s [sic!] main and only regular paper goes out on time seems a pretty basic thing we should be making sure happens. Why is it that the movement doesn’t manage this, give the almost universal praise for the paper?” Again, perhaps we can forgive him his poor writing ability, but really, if the paper actually had better content, it might attract more support. As it is (and has been for decades), the content is largely dull, poorly written, and narrowly focused.

What might have been a decent essay by my favorite anthropologist, Brian Morris, “The Great Beyond,” ostensibly a deconstruction of post-structuralist anarchism, is really just an opportunity for the author to let the reader know that the leading post-structuralist philosophers were not anarchists. Duh. Most of the

self-described “post-structuralist anarchists” don’t look to Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, Beaudrillard et al as anarchists either—but as post-structuralists. The supposed innovations of insular academic nobodies like Todd May or Saul Newman is to couple the jargon of the post-structuralists with their own caricatures of academic-based anarchism (ie, an anarchism divorced from the world of real people engaged in real struggles for autonomy and self-organization). Morris also uses his space to bash Nietzsche, “who was of course...not an anarchist at all but a proto-fascist.” That nobody claims Nietzsche as an anarchist is irrelevant; the important thing is to make sure that he and his philosophical insights are definitively excluded from any possible consideration due to the taint of the nazis’ later use of some of his terminology. How the “aristocratic individualism” of Nietzsche could be reconciled with the extreme anti-individualism of fascism the author does not bother to mention (would that count as an *unter*-mention?).

Number 24 (15 December) contains an inexplicable essay by former *Green Anarchist* co-editor Steve Booth; it’s inexplicable for two huge reasons. The first is that Booth, upon resigning from GA, started his own fake magazine with the same name, promising to join forces with the Green

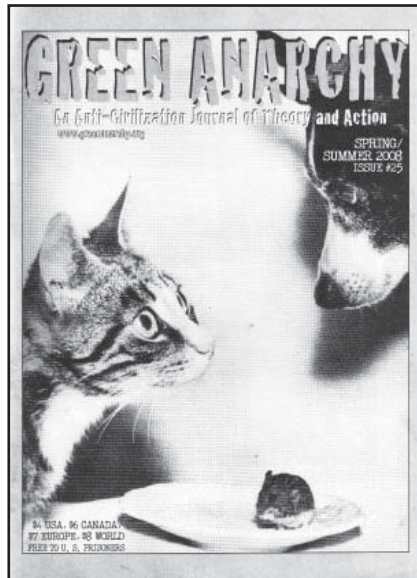
Party as well as something he called “the wider peace movement.” The implication—and the second reason for his inexplicable inclusion as a featured writer—was that he was prepared to give up his affiliation to anarchism (despite his continued use of the word in the title of his soon-defunct publication), because it was “negative.” Booth’s cheap shots and scurrilous accusations against his former co-editors (that one of them was a US “state asset”) were matched by his obsession with showing how bad primitivism is. The editorial collective at *Freedom* have given him one more ahistorical platform from which to do it. Booth’s opening is transparent: “If the notion that technology interlocks and is out of control can be shown to be false or meaningless, then Primitivism is refuted.” Except that I have no idea what he means by “interlocks,” and I know of no anarcho-primitivist who removes technology from human agency. So Booth, as usual, uses a strawman argument to dismiss primitivism. The only logical conclusion I can draw is that Booth’s repetitious, badly written, and ultimately unconvincing essay was featured because the editors of *Freedom* share Booth’s disdain.

To complete my irritation—and as if to prove one of the points in my previous editorial—comes the announcement, un-

der the regular feature “Prison news,” of the availability of a “Political Prisoners” calendar. The announcement is actually the press release of the six-year old project, put together by three “political prisoners” with the help of folks from Montreal and New York. “The Certain Days calendar is a collection of artwork and political texts addressing some of the most pressing political issues of our day, with all funds raised by [sic] going directly to supporting political prisoners and anti-imperialist struggles... Contributors to this year’s calendar include...” Well, you know, the usual suspects, with a token anarchist thrown in to round out the bunch. I’m not saying that supporting political people in prison is a bad thing, but anarchists might want to take a moment or two to reflect on the actual meaning of “political prisoner” and try to figure out whether most anarchists would fit into that category if any of us were to be convicted of something that looks like regular criminal activity—minus the political rhetoric attempting to justify it in the name of supporting someone else’s struggle.[LJ]

**Green Anarchy #25**  
PO Box 11331  
Eugene OR 97440  
96 pages, \$4

What else is there to say about GA that we haven’t said a dozen times? The magazine is filled to the brim with content, the layout is distinctive but an acquired taste. This issue has been a year in the making and was missed.



We need a green anarchist publication to fill the gap that GA is leaving behind if it is only coming out once a year (or less).

John Zerzan has a couple of interesting articles in this issue. “Silence” is a critique of just how fucking noisy Civilization is, and reads more poetically than most of JZ’s writing. Zerzan’s article “Alone Together: The City and its Inmates” seems like the next stage of his Origins series. Additional articles of interest include one on

Comedy that turns out to be an ode to George Carlin – which is particularly touching now that the Carlin has passed. Also word from Sadie and Exile is always great to hear. They are an inspiration to all of us. Finally the report back on the Feral Visions gathering of 2007 brings a sad note to that series of events as the freddies came down pretty hard on the gathering – nipping it in the bud. [A!]

**Hobnail Review #8-11**  
Box 208, 235 Earls  
Court Road  
London SW5 9FE UK  
8 pages, donation

This is an interesting project coming regularly out of the UK. Mostly it comprises micro reviews of independent, but primarily anarchist, material; histories of a libertarian publishing projects, and the like. *Hobnail* is interested in the history of anarchism and anarchist literature. [A!]

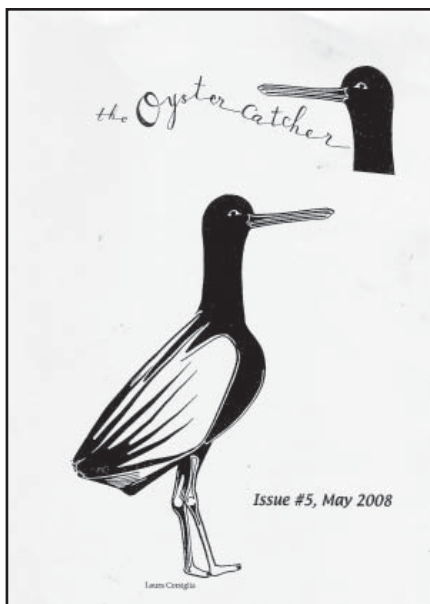
ps - *HR*, succumbing to the usual pressures on print media, has ceased publication.

**The Match #106**  
PO Box 3012  
Tucson AZ 85702  
76 pages, donation

Fred is still cranking them out. Good for him. [A!]

**The Oystercatcher** #5  
A - 4062 Wren Road  
Denman Island BC  
Canada V0R 1T0  
40 pages, donation

The new issue of *Oystercatcher* has a fantastic article on Sun Ra and his utopian vision, including his pursuit of a black separatist movement that was strong enough to build and launch spacecraft to jettison this world and embrace “the impossibilities of the submerged collective memories of a lost New World.” There is also a nice article by Seaweed on the history of the Canadian National Park system. Ron also has a poem-homage to Bakunin “written after learning that Bakunin pronounced the following on his death bed ‘Everything will pass and the world will perish but the ninth symphony will remain’” that exceeds the form. *The Oystercatcher*



is Surrealism, Anarchy and British Columbia and doesn't disappoint. [A]

**Social Anarchism** #41  
2743 Maryland Ave  
Baltimore MD  
100 pages, \$6

The direction that *Social Anarchism* has gone in is best seen through the writing of Peter Stone in his review of Sakolsky's book *Creating Anarchy* and his take on the story Sakolsky told of a bus driver. As this story goes: one day a bus driver in Chicago decided that he was bored with his job and that he would take the bus (with whichever of his riders want to come) to Florida. Sakolsky, of course, sees this moment as an inspiring break with daily life. Peter Stone's analysis was quite different.

“If this is the reason for sympathizing with the bus driver, then the solution to his problems is a change in the rules and institutions within which he had to operate. Perhaps if Chicago's buses were run via some kind of worker's collective, within the context of an anarcho-syndicalist society, the driver would have a chance to switch routes every few months, or engage

in more interesting tasks related to bus driving (helping to plan future bus routes, designing new and more energy-efficient buses, etc)...” Yikes.

Couple that with the lead article presenting anarchism as the “living dream of the Enlightenment,” the second article dreaming of an “Ecological Civilization”, and you see that the creative energies of *Social Anarchism* are at an all time low. [A]

### **Super-Happy Anarcho Fun Pages**

#11 Fall '07  
[www.tangledwilderness.org](http://www.tangledwilderness.org)  
12 pages, free

There's nothing like a good chuckle to liven up my day, and this small zine provides it. Badly drawn comic strips make fun of activism, primitivism, and suburban kids. It's nice to see a publication that makes light of the milieu.[CJ]

### **Wake Up Screaming**

PO Box 3  
Eugene Oregon 97440  
[breakthechains02@yahoo.com](mailto:breakthechains02@yahoo.com)  
54 pages, Free

The author doesn't set the goals for this publication too high. “This zine will probably be flipped



over by at the most a few hundred people from my own punk/alternative/radical/activist/whatever communities. That's all I'm hoping for, to share some information with like-minded individuals that hopefully can find something meaningful here.” The zine contains a few reprints – for example a short essay on love from “I, Claudia” – as well as some informative essays on Daniel McGowan, Jeffery Luers, and Bill Rodgers. Near the end of the zine I came across a shocking picture that made the zine worth reading, publishing, and distributing. It was a picture entitled “Fuck the Troops.” The picture is of two soldiers having anal sex with each other, while a third soldier in the background touches his own gigantic penis. If anarchist zines had more titillating pictures like this perhaps we would become more relevant. [CJ]

# ANARCHY EIGHTS

A CRAZY CARD GAME FOR TWO OR MORE PLAYERS

## Introduction

by Lawrence

The true origins of “Anarchy 8s” are shrouded in the mists of time, obscured by the intervening 15 years or so. Nobody remembers who exactly suggested that each card in the deck might have a function beyond being another one to put in the discard pile.

Back in the early 1990s, when my companion and I lived in the country, we would often visit our friend and fellow anarchist Jim. He’d make us dinner and we’d hang out, sometimes playing the semi-improvisational graphic music he composed, sometimes playing cards. One night I suggested we play the old favorite “Crazy 8s,” a game I’d started playing again at the first fulltime job I had (my co-worker, an “independent Marxist” who’d been purged from the Sparts, re-introduced it to me, with expanded rules). It was no longer merely a game of getting rid of all your cards with 8s as wild cards that changed the suit; it now included points that your opponent would get by adding up the values of the cards you had left after the end of a round, plus extra functions for 2s and 3s (each meant losing a turn; the 2 meant picking up two extra cards from the deck, the 3 meant picking up three). If you ended up with a 2 in your hand, it cost you 20 points; a 3 cost 30; and an 8 cost 50. The game I’d played as a child was a game of almost 100% chance, while this new version was a game of strategy and chance mixed about 50-50.

Jim, an obsessive host, had plenty of other visitors besides us, and on one occasion some friends with kids came over. Since he has

no TV some other activity had to be organized to keep the kids amused and/or busy, so about six or seven people sat down to play “Crazy 8s,” which the kids already knew. Jim explained about the 2s and 3s, and after a few rounds, someone—really nobody remembers who—suggested that more cards than just 2s, 3s, and 8s might do something to enliven the game. Each round became goofier, as another card was enlisted to add variations: reverse direction of play, skip the next player, lock a number or suit, etc. After a few hours the kids were done, but the adults kept at it until each card meant a different thing, and the rules had to be written down to be consulted constantly. What began as a game that lasted perhaps 30 minutes with two or three players became a two or three hour laugh-fest.

Each time people visited Jim, he’d break out two decks of cards and practically force his guests to play. In this way, he and every other player were able to refine the rules, making new suggestions, and making sure that the game was ultimately winnable—not many people want to play a game that can’t be won, or that has no end. I can proudly say that I was the first winner of the first generation of the new game (I also recently gave the game its new name). The game continues to be revised and refined, however, and I haven’t won since. Part of the beauty of “Anarchy 8s” is that anyone can take the idea of each card doing something and change the rules any time, or start from scratch. “Anarchy

8s” shows the possibility of expropriating an activity that has little directly anti-authoritarian relevance and turning into an explicitly self-organized voluntary interaction that can be replicated and expanded by anyone who wants to play. Propaganda of the

## Rules

### *The Basic Game:*

Use a regular 52-card pack, or two packs if a large group is playing, or the 8-suit deck known as the Full Deck.

With 2 to 4 players deal 7 cards. For more than 4 players deal 5 cards.

The dealer turns over the top card of the pack as the starter. The player at the dealer’s left must cover it with a card of either the same value or the same suit (with the exception of 9’s, which cannot appear as the first card, see below). The first upturned card has no additional meaning. For example, if the first card turned over is a 2, that does not mean that the first person to the left of the dealer has to draw two cards. If, however, the player covers with a 2, then the next person must draw two cards. Similarly, if the first card turned over is an ace, that does not change the direction of play. However, if the first player covers the ace with an ace then that does change the direction of play.

If the first card turned over is a 9, then the dealer should turn over another card; the first card turned over cannot be a 9.

Once again, the player to the immediate left of the dealer

should cover the card with the same suit or number. If unable or unwilling to do so, the player must draw cards from the pack until the player matches the turned up card as described. The turned up cards form the discard pile.

#### *Discard rules:*

**Ace** – this reverses the direction of play unless the game consists of only two people. If the game consists of only two people, the Ace has no additional meaning.

**2** – The next person must draw two cards and also loses their turn unless, 1) they can discard a 7 (see below), or 2) they can discard a 2. If they discard a 2 then this bumps the draw to the next player who then must draw two cards and loses their turn unless they can discard a 7 or 2, etc.

**3** – The next person loses their turn unless 1) they discard a 7 (see below), or 2) they discard a 2. If they discard a 3 then the player following them no longer loses their turn unless they can discard a 7 or 3, etc.

**4** – Reverses the direction of play (unless the game consists of just two people) and the previous player (now the first person in the reversed direction) must draw two cards and also loses their turn unless 1) they discard a 7 or a 9 (see below), or 2) they can discard a 4. If they discard a 4 then this bumps the draw to the next player in the reversed direction who then must draw two cards and loses their turn unless they can discard a 7 or 4, etc.

Note the difference between Aces and Fours: In a three person game (players A,

B, and C) if player A discards an Ace, this reverses direction of play. If player C discards an Ace, the play goes back to player A. However, if player A discards a 4, and then player C discards a 4, the play now goes to B.

**5** – The player may discard a second card beneath the 5.

**6** – The next player may discard a card beneath the 6.

**7** – any 7 cancels 2's, 3's, 4's, and Queen of Spades/Squares. Play resumes from the 7, meaning the next player must discard either a 7 or a card of the same suit as the 7.

**8** – Wild card; player may discard on top of any other card except for 2, 3, 4, or the Queen of Spades/Squares. Player may also declare any suit. The next player must then cover the 8 with the declared suit or another 8. Players may not use an 8 to evade consequences of 2's, 3's, 4's, or the Queen of Spades/Squares.

**9** – Players may only discard 9's in Number Lock (see 10 below) or Suit Lock (see King below) or pass the card when a player discards a Jack, or they may discard it beneath a 4, 6, or Queen of Clubs/Circles.

**10** – Number Lock. Discarding a 10 requires players to follow with a card either numerically the same or just above or just below in any suit. Thus, after a 10, the next player must discard either a 10, or a

9, or a Jack. The Number Lock runs around; thus one may play King, Ace, 2. If a player discards an 8 following a 7 or 9 or on top of another 8, then Number Lock continues. If a player discards an 8 at any other time, then this breaks the Number Lock and resumes normal play with the discarder declaring suit as in 8 above. Discarding a King in Number Lock does not result in Suit Lock (see King below). A player may use a 7 to cancel a 2, 3, 4, or Queen of Spades as above; however, the person following the discarded 7 must continue from the 7, meaning they must follow with a 6, 7, or 8. Also, a player may respond to a 2 by placing another 2 on the just discarded 2 as in 2 above. Once again, play resumes from the last 2 discarded; similarly for 3's and 4's.

**Jack** – Everyone passes one card in the direction of play.



Queen of Spades (and Queen of Squares for 8-suit deck) – Next person draws 3 cards and loses their turn; but see 7.

Queen of Hearts (and Queen of Spirals for 8-suit deck) – Everyone else must draw one card, but no one loses their turn.

Queen of Diamonds (and Queen of Triangles for 8-suit deck) – Discarder must draw one card

Queen of Clubs (and Queen of Circles for 8-suit deck) – Everyone gets to discard one card beneath the Queen of Clubs.

King – Suit Lock. Everyone must follow suit, but not number. 8 breaks the Suit Lock unless the 8 has the same suit as the King. In that case the discarder has the option of breaking the Suit Lock and resuming normal play, or declaring that the Suit Lock continues. Discarding a 10 does not result in Number Lock while in Suit Lock. A player may use a 7 to cancel, 2, 3, 4, or Queen of Spades as above; however, this switches the Suit Lock to the suit of the discarded 7 and the next player must follow the suit of the 7. If a 7 switches the suit of the Suit Lock, then an 8 in the new suit allows for the same options as a discarded 8 in the original suit of the Suit Lock determined by the original discarded King. A player may respond to a discarded 2 by discarding a 2 of their own as in 2 above. Suit Lock continues from the suit of the last 2 discarded. If a series of 2's switches the suit of the Suit Lock, then an 8 in the new suit allows for the same op-

tions as a discarded 8 in the original suit of the Suit Lock determined by the original discarded King. Similarly for 2's and 4's.

## *Going Out or How To Win*

When a player has only two cards left, they must announce this to the rest of the players by knocking, on the table. The first player to dispose of all their cards wins. The winner receives points from each of the other players, according to the cards they hold: Each eight, 50; each face card (K, Q, J), 10; each spot card, its value from 10 down to Ace, 1. 500 equals game.

## Joker Module

Players activate this module by including the two Jokers of the deck (or 4 Jokers for the 8-suit deck). A player may discard a Joker at any turn except that they may not use a Joker to counter a 2, 3, 4, Queen of Spades, or Queen of Hearts. If a player discards a Joker, the player then must toss one six-sided die. If the number of the die equals:

1 – Odd Lock. Players may only discard the following: Ace, 3, 5, 7, and 9. Any suit in any order. The numbers retain their meaning. Discarding an 8 in Odd Lock breaks the lock.

2 – Even Lock. Players may only discard the following cards: 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10. Any suit in any order. The numbers retain their meaning. For example, if someone discards a 2, the next player must draw two cards and loses their turn unless they can also discard

a 2. Similarly for 4's. Players may not discard a 7 to negate a 2 or 4 in Even Lock. Discarding a 10 in Even Lock does not result in Number Lock. An 8 does not function as a wild card in Even Lock and has no additional meaning. Discarding a 7 in Even Lock breaks the lock and play continues from the 7 as per usual.

3 – Face Lock. Players may only discard Jacks, Queens, and Kings. Any suit in any order. Cards retain their meaning except that discarding a King does not result in Suit Lock. Players may not discard a 7 to negate the effect of the Queen of Spades (and Queen of Squares for the 8-suit deck) while in Face Lock. Discarding an 8 in Face Lock breaks the lock.

4 – Prime Lock. Players may only discard the following: Ace, 2, 3, 5, and 7. Cards retain their meanings. Discarding an 8 in Prime Lock breaks the lock.

5 – Red Lock. Play continues as per normal except that players may only discard diamonds or hearts (and spirals or triangles for the 8-suit deck). Discarding a black 8 in Red Lock breaks the lock.

6 – BLACK LOCK. Play continues as per normal except that players may only discard clubs or spades (and Squares or Circles for the 8-suit deck). Discarding a red 8 in Black Lock breaks the lock.

If a player discards a Joker during a Number or Suit Lock, the Joker removes play from those locks. Similarly, if a player discards a Joker during one of the Joker Locks, then the player rolls the six-sided die and play moves to the new lock.

## GOD

*Everything that is  
doddering, squint-eyed,  
infamous, sullyng and  
grotesque is contained for  
me in this single word: God.*  
—André Breton

*If god existed, it would be  
necessary to abolish him.*  
—Mikhail Bakunin

God is a spook that has been haunting the human race for thousands of years. That such a petty, tyrannical non-being continues to haunt our world raises serious questions about the intelligence of our so-called intelligent species. But the stupidity of the continuing belief in such a (non) being is not the primary concern for anarchists. Rather, the statement of Bakunin, that hairy-faced lover of the wicked passions, reflects the anarchist concern. Since anarchists reject authority, they must reject god, because god represents the most absolute form of authority.

As Bakunin's declaration suggests, this anarchist atheism is not some tolerant, condescendingly compassionate atheism that treats religious belief with understanding. Rather it is a fierce, blasphemous, contemptuous atheism that aims to destroy every last vestige of the phantom of god wherever it raises its mangy, flea-bitten head. Just as there can be no tolerance of kings or presidents, cops or judges, capitalists or commissars among anarchists, there can also be no tolerance of god...

It is obvious to me that god does not exist as an actual being



## The Egoist Encyclopedia

by Wolfi Landstreicher

in itself. If the old pagan gods existed, we would certainly have encountered them in a concrete form—talking bulls or swans seducing our lovers, petty superbeings using us as pawns in their silly conflicts, dangerous giants casting thunderbolts or turning boats on the open sea into grape arbors... You know the stories. Certainly these gods provide us now with amusing tall tales that are generally more literary and erotic than the tales of superheroes in our comic books. In addition, despite their pettiness, bad tempers and capriciousness, they are much more likeable—and believable—than the tyrannical bully of the three monotheistic religions.

This fellow is also petty and temperamental. Furthermore, perhaps due to his lack of any erotic outlet, he is also quite vicious and lacking in self-esteem. If, in the oldest of these three religions, he limited himself to viciously attacking the enemies of his chosen people or punishing these chosen ones for infidelity, in christianity and islam, he goes so far as to threaten all those who don't believe in him with eternal torture. Obviously, he doesn't have any real faith in himself or he wouldn't have such a desperate need for others to worship him; so I assume he would send himself into those flames as well. This lack of confidence may also explain why this sorry example of a supreme being feels the need to meddle in the personal affairs of human beings—an allegedly intelligent<sup>a</sup> species on an insignificant planet circling a minor star on the outskirts of one among innumerable galaxies—despite the fact that he also supposedly created and maintains a universe that we now know to be so vast as to appear infinite to us. This pathetic tyrant is a patent absurdity.

Unfortunately, there are ways in which god does exist. First of all god exists as a phantom haunting the minds of believers. In this form, the spook produces guilt, shame, a myriad of irrational fears, crippling repression, and, as a consequence of all this, an often vicious tendency to seek out "sin" in others in order to cast judgment upon them. This is god.

As a consequence of this mental haunting, the divine spook also haunts human be-

ings socially, and this haunting affects non-believers as well as believers. It has manifested in religious wars, inquisitions, clitorodectomies, blue laws, abortion clinic bombings, sharia, the special degradation of women<sup>b</sup> and so on and so on. This too is god.

A careful look at its social consequences shows how this spook tends to repress rebelliousness, promote obedience, and uphold authority. There are reasons why certain powerful people invented this concept and why every state, even those that are allegedly atheist<sup>c</sup>, maintain it in some form.

Now, I have heard the ad-dle-brained new age arguments (if you can call them that), which try to separate god from its religious origins: "Well, don't you think that there must be some power that created all this and that holds it together? Wouldn't that be god?" My answer is simply "no" and "no." I see no need to add a further inexplicable layer to an already inexplicable reality. Such musings may make for a fun philosophical game to play on a rainy day, but they add nothing to our understanding of the world around us and how to deal with it; if taken seriously, it just adds further complications.

But even assuming that such a power did exist, it would be far too abstract and distant to qualify as a god in any humanly meaningful sense. The concept of god was developed due to the effects it could have on human beings and their social reality. Its use for explaining the reality of the entire universe was, at best, a secondary byproduct of its psychological and so-

cial utility. And this utility lies in the concept of god as a personal being who loves and hates, rewards, punishes and avenges. The abstract power put forward in these new age arguments is far too impersonal and remote to fulfill this essential aspect of the concept of god. It can provide no real comfort and provoke no real fear. Thus, it fails as a god.

Furthermore, it is utterly unnecessary. As I see it, the relationships between the various materials and forces, substances and energies that make up what we call the universe are what create it and hold it together. I understand that these may be far too complex for human beings to ever understand them completely, but they require no external force to exist. More significantly, these relationships are something different from the new agers' power or any other so-called god in a few very significant ways: 1) they are not external to the universe; 2) they are not entities, but activities, interactions; 3) they do not create a unity of all things, but rather an endless, interweaving fluctuation that maintains the uniqueness of each being in each moment. The very opposite of a supreme being.

But getting back to the god-spook that haunts this world: I think it is pretty obvious from what I said above that anarchists, desiring a world without hierarchy and authority, without servility, petty prejudice, and blind respect for idiocies disguised as Higher Wisdom, would want to do everything in their

power to eradicate any trace of this vicious, senile old phantom from the face of the earth. Freedom and god are utterly incompatible.

As an egoist, I have still more reason for attacking this spook. Taking my life as my own to create as I see fit, all those who strive to create it for (or rather against) me are my enemies. This is why, in 1978, I had to kill the god that my religious upbringing had implanted in my mind. And it is why I will continue to fight against all the god-lovers who seek to impose the will of their beloved delusions upon me. As Lautréamont put it so well: "My subjectivity and the Creator: this is too much for one brain."

So god is nothing more than a mental and social construct, a spook, a delusion. But these are precisely the things that people hold onto most tightly. As reasonable as atheism may be, well-reasoned arguments will generally fall on deaf ears. So let's waste no time using a velvet glove on god. These are times instead for the fierce, sharp weapons of mockery, blasphemy and harsh, derisive laughter. This pathetic spook and the fools who believe in it deserve nothing less.

a See my comment on this above.

b Beyond the degradation of all human beings intrinsic to the concept of god.

c The Bolsheviks, for example, had their "Godmakers" who invented rituals, icons and so on to appeal to the religiosity of the Russian people. They were the ones behind Lenin's tomb, where the Great Leader's corpse



## *Liana Doctrines* Anarchist Solitaire

Independence. It's part of the national identity. A true-blue US citizen is bold, righteous, proud, innovative, strong, perhaps not very educated, but most certainly independent. One of the biggest holidays in the US celebrates national independence, typically with an excess of cheap flags, barbecues, and alcohol. At night, simulations of bombs bursting in time to the national anthem entertain hordes of citizens relaxing in armchairs and enjoying a bloated sense of nationalistic superiority, while conveniently ignoring the poverty of their options.

So what does independence mean? It can describe such indistinct concepts as self-government, autonomy, freedom, self-determination, nonalignment, self-sufficiency, etc. Part of the problem with the word is that it is so vague. It could encompass almost any activity that someone wanted to engage in, as long as no one told that person to do it. It's an ideal that requires distance from others; solitary desire. But is it even possible to achieve? Perhaps in some small ways. One could be independent of a certain person's control, or another person's opinions. This certainly has appeal for anarchists because it encourages us not to conform, to maintain our opposition, to govern ourselves, and be free. But can anyone be truly independent? What would

we be free from? Each other? Things? Underneath its star-studded exterior, I believe independence is an impossible label, like the concepts of perfect and good. No one is really independent. So why does this concept exist? What is the use of it?

In addition to being a dissent-baffling sham for the state, citizens who value independence can be very lucrative. If the population is convinced that they shouldn't want or need any help from the state, it leaves money available for other, more important endeavors, like colonization. It also forces citizens to purchase their own healthcare, protection, education, and shelter, further stimulating the economy. The desire to appear independent also encourages maximum productivity from all able persons, increasing revenues from taxes. And if the population-sedating propaganda and money weren't enough, there's always the fatigue and anxiety from being overworked to wear down any potential opposition. And if you aren't happy with this situation or can't keep up? It's your own damn fault, 'cause you're a US citizen, and you can do anything if you put your mind to it.

What about a black flag waving anarchist? Does our mythic identity include a fierce independence? Is the model anarchist very different from the model US citizen? I get a nervous twinge in my gut when I pose these questions to myself.

In our milieu the idea of independence could go hand in hand with the DIY scene. It meshes nicely with the individualist and egoist perspectives. Anarchists

like Voltairine deCleyre have talked about independence being so important to making well-rounded radicals that they advocated an avoidance of dependent relationships, such as marriage. Many of us already choose to live in near isolation from each other, interacting minimally with the anarchists around us, or mainly through the internet. I have even witnessed communitarian anarchists resort to individualistic rhetoric when tensions arise in their scene. And who of us doesn't get dreamy eyed imagining ourselves to be like Guy Fawkes on November 5th? So, what does being independent give us that's so great for our movement?

The concept of independence, however nebulously understood, does promote some valuable traits in radicals and in our larger networks. It encourages us to take responsibility for our own lives, and become skilled as individuals. It provides the freedom to be selfish and self-serving (as we should be!) without guilt, so that we can follow our desires. It assumes that everyone is strong and competent enough to assert themselves as needed, and keeps us on our guard for potential predators. It keeps relationships in a mode of fluid negotiation, where the desires of all parties are actively promoted. It encourages us to be efficient, able to function on our own, and to be prolific, so that our movement thrives and we are not a drain on the people around us. It supports us feeling strong and competent, prepared for emergencies. It makes for a fulfilled anarchist with a sense of self, who can Get Shit Done.



At what cost, though?

If the reasoning behind encouraging independence is that it will create well-rounded people to propel a strong movement, then we need to consider what falls by the wayside if we over-value this concept. Firstly, it could create a hierarchy of worth, which could lead us to devalue certain people (ie those who can't take care of themselves because of age – either too old or too young – skill, or ability). Secondly, if we take for granted that each person has made their life exactly what they desire because they are self-governing, then how willing or inclined will we be to point out when we think we see them exploiting or being exploited by another? Exploitation could become invisible to us, and would undermine our fellowships by allowing inappropriate behaviors to continue unchecked. Thirdly, this mindset could encourage people to think in solely individualistic terms; while this may be rewarding in some ways, it

could also set up anti-social or competitive interactions, where the closeness associated with needing and providing for each other is lost.

Canonizing independence could also impair our ability to cultivate our most empowered selves. Being solely responsible for our lives and circumstances would let the state off the hook and could lead to feeling stressed about our individual performances. It could also promote perfectionist and controlling personalities, people who can't relax, take their time and enjoy, and certainly those who can't ask for or receive help graciously. It would also encourage us to hide any areas in our lives where we are dependent. The state craftily provided us with the medium of money to help us obfuscate our interdependence. This allows us to fool ourselves into thinking we are independent, by paying people money instead of forming the friendships and social networks that are necessary to get

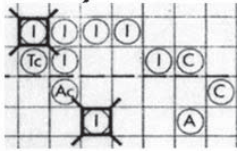
even our basic needs taken care of. There is something decidedly lopsided in so much of that kind of independence.

In the past we were shucking off our traditional roles, asserting ourselves as individuals and more concerned with becoming autonomous. I believe now is the time for anarchists to draw closer together, and to begin to behave as the flexible association of philosophical relations that we are. Navigating the line between communitarianism and individualism is not so easy, since we have no one tradition to follow. Our broken and mixed heritages offer a lot to borrow from, to shape our relationships to mesh with our various philosophies. This is beautiful because it allows us to honor our desires for independence and not re-create the rigid roles that are so confining in many societies. But this also leaves us with a lot to negotiate, attempt, and re-negotiate with those we choose to associate with.

I understand why so many of us choose to work alone; at times independence seems easier to achieve than lasting affinity. I have watched many beautiful communities blossom and then fade into oblivion as the years pass. I see this work of repairing our ability to bond deeply, and depend on one another for entire lifetimes, as one of the great tasks that lie ahead for us.

By being more mindful of who we give our money, attention, time, and skills to, we can keep all the benefits of independence while supporting our collectives, groups, and projects more effectively. We can become truly well-rounded anarchists who can critically engage, and provide mutual aid without compromise to our ideals or associations.

## Anarchy & Strategy



by Aragorn!

## Unconventional War

Board games are immensely popular in Germany where some recent games are a genre unto themselves. German-style board games combine thoughtful play, some strategic elements, and enough randomness to make games competitive for different levels of players. They usually do not include elements like player elimination or complicated calculations. They tend toward themes rather than abstraction (think Risk rather than Chess). While some of these games have become popular in North America, the difference between the German family sitting at the dinner table playing a board game and an American family whose only time together is spent watching television speaks volumes about the difference between the two societies.

An interesting characteristic of German Games (GG) is the exploitation of different kinds of game processes, which makes a game more playable for more types of players—if not more satisfying. Competitive players, new players, and casual gamers can all enjoy German-style board games.

Recently I was at the home of a co-worker, where we played a highly modified version of Settlers of Cataan, the most popular GG in North America. These house rules softened most of the *hard*

elements of the game (namely the elements that are competitive and aggressive) to make the game more pleasant for some of the players. The result is that the number of ways to win the game were drastically reduced, more time was spent setting up the pieces (the technics of the game) than actually playing it, and the lifespan of the game (the amount of time it would take to grow bored of it) was greatly reduced. Our hosts did not realize that it is the complexity-through-simplicity of Settlers of Cataan that makes it appealing, rather than the hard or soft elements of the game. These house rules apparently worked for my hosts but made the game, on the whole, less engaging to me and the other non-house players.

On the flipside of this kind of play, a small circle of us around town have taken to playing Settlers of Cataan with some regularity. Our games are, to put it gently, rough. Rough enough that people who are turned off by competitive environments steer clear of our games altogether and only a few types of personalities stick with the playing. The play itself is an odd combination of psychological conflict, harsh laughter, and the different personalities. Along with the boorish alpha males (among whom I count myself) are the pre-postal uptight white people, and the people who play to lose. The gaming becomes a microcosm of the political universe most of us have a desire to escape.

Those who refuse to play write off the whole practice as more-of-the-same and while they are *right*, their analysis raises a question. How do we break patterns, socialize, or engage in any project, if we don't do it with the full knowledge of who we are

working with? How do they deal with pressure? How do they win and how do they lose?

What if, instead of judging the merits of an activity (like a board game) on its political palatability or how anarchist it is, we evaluate games on criteria like rule implementation, effective symbolism, and relation to life outside the game? Rather than focus on the correctness of a perspective or how it will play to the Lowest Common Denominator, we could focus on systemic flexibility. For example, if our goal is to have a pleasant evening, we first have to provide for chatty and competitive people; second, provide enough structure to give our evening a beginning, middle and an end; third, allow enough fluidity for everyone to feel included in each part of the evening and the game.

.....

Warfare has heretofore entailed the strategic placement of material and actors. Resolution invariably reflected the amount of material placed, positional superiority, and/or the kind of violence inflicted by the actors. The major conflicts of the twentieth century were of this type; one brutal violent machine pressing against another – grinding people in between.

The twenty-first century (especially if you start the 21st century immediately at the fall of the Berlin Wall) holds the possibility of transforming (a) social violence beyond all recognition. There will still be terror raining from the sky (at least until the fuel runs out) but the likelihood of another conflict where rival factions place nearly identical military units on a battlefield to slug it out for a hill or a city seems as quaint as lining up redcoats in the city

square. It could still happen, but the past 20 years doesn't lead one to believe it will.

Birthrates, new holy wars (the Fedayeen vs. the Neo-Cons), food riots, fuel riots, and suicide bombing comprise modern elements to conflicts in this epoch. They aren't icons that can be placed on a battlefield by disinterested generals. *These are not vectors with one dimension. They are markers to a conflict in a multi-dimensional universe.* They represent forces that combine ideology and power in such measure as to defy (post)modernist categorization.

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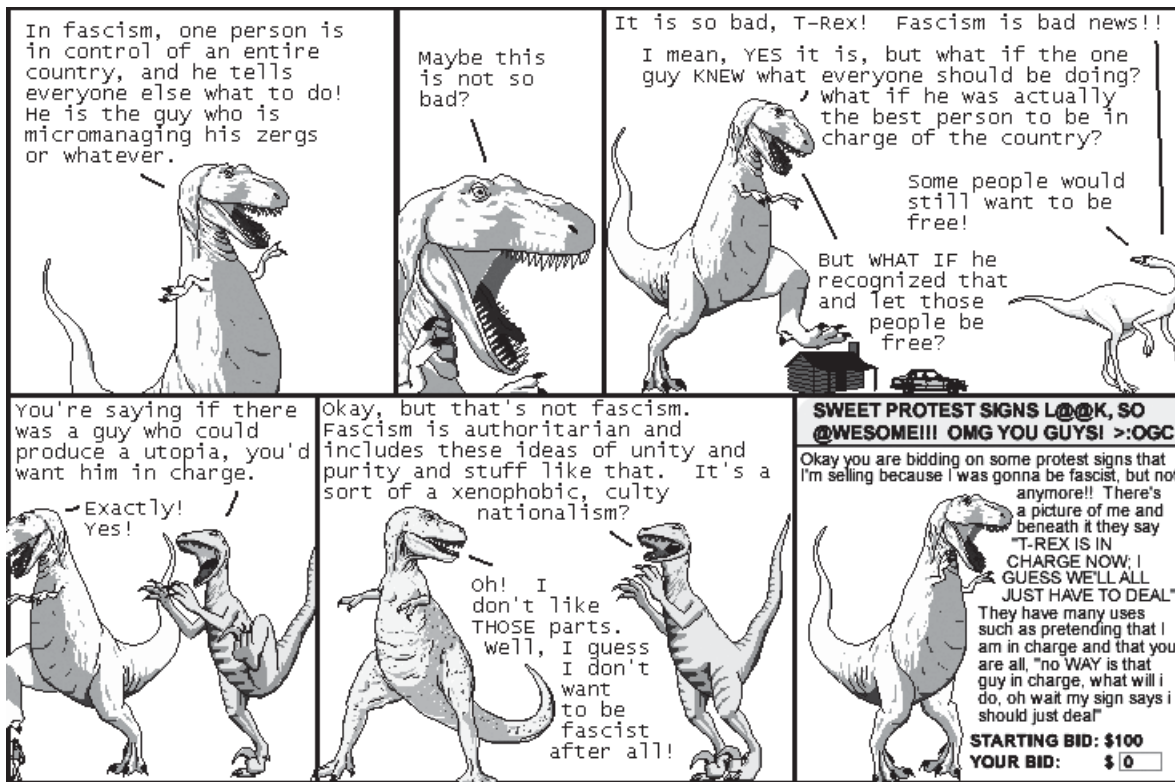
Anarchism has become *both* more like a game and more like non-traditional warfare since the twentieth century came to a close. On the one hand the goals

of anarchism have become as varied as life in society. No longer are anarchists chained to the role of leftist partisans, givers-of-charity, martyrs, or villains. Anarchists can be book sellers, academics, carpenters, and a thousand other things. Anarchism, as a goal and a practice, is something that brings joy to the practitioners or is a habit to be shunned. Anarchists are either people we enjoy playing with or they should return to the gray.

On the other hand, the methods by which Capitalism and the State will be defeated (in North America at least) will not look like organizing the workplace, selling newspapers, or chanting the name of our fearless leader. It will probably not look like black masks and broken windows either, but it is likely there will be both. It is likely

that if a near-total transformation is to happen, it will be by NTW (non-traditional warfare). It will be because of rioting, IEDs (improvised explosive devices), and un-mappable violence in the belly of the beast. It is likely to look like attack-by-all-means. It will look like raising children without aspirations toward the colonists, and without hope. It will, if it is to occur, look like the last gasps of a cultural regime that has run its course.

Our play today speaks, without comprehension, to this future. Knowing the futility of running into planted pikes, we resign ourselves to this play. But pikes are nothing but metal-capped staves.



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# Have something to say?

## Write us

"God Lives  
in Prison"

And Again

dear editors,

as always thank you for continuing to send me some anarchy in here. the one thing i cannot refrain from commenting on is the letter printed under 'dirt on the greens' written by a fellow prisoner of some of my co-defendants, exposing Meyerhoff and Tubbs as losers, which of course they are. for my part, i was housed for 15 months in the same county jail as Chelsea Gerlach, who at every turn was trying to urge me to "cooperate," later revealed to be a part of her plea agreement quite unsurprisingly. she also attended the church/bible study meetings in jail, and other inmates told me she often put in prayer requests for me to "do the right thing." now thankfully i'm not christian or "doing the right thing" might mean repenting or bowing down, but at any rate i was quite irate to find out her nefarious designs.

what Kyle Nonneman wrote is true, though christian jail conversions are hardly unusual among the weak, whether A/ELFers or tweakers and junkies, god lives in prison. however i don't want to be lumped into any category that my co-defendants reside in – speaking only for myself, i *am* an anarchist, and i didn't inform on anyone, nor would i ever.

all the hype of the "green scare" strikes me as pretty stupid, just another media-savvy approach for publicity. for terra-ism, sadie  
(aka joyanna zacher)

Dear AJODA:

I have lamented what I considered un-anarchistic statements so extensively, in so many letters to *Anarchy*, that I feel obligated to write and thank you for—and highly commend—all of #65. I do not agree with every statement, of course, but you have produced an entire issue without any sweeping conclusory statements—value-judgments passed off as arguments—declaring, without offers of evidentiary support, what "Anarchism" is not. That has been the theme of previous complaints. I particularly enjoyed Jarach's Anti-Imperialism critique (p. 2), Aragorn's *Endgame* review, and Liana Doctrine's discussion of the Blame-Game (p. 66). Jarach's translation of *Call* is one of the most remarkable documents I have ever read, and I look forward to Part II.

Sakolsky mentioned fractals—was that a 'Freudian slip' in your professed technophobia? Seriously though, Fractal Geometry is a subset of *Chaos Theory*, a field that is literally about the system-dynamics of Anarchism as it is perceived by science. Of course, because no chaos theorist or fractal geometer has come out publicly in favor of Anarchism, Aragorn (and Landstreicher) would reject this claim *in toto*. As the *Call* treatise explains, "We have seen the purest anarchism negate what it cannot comprehend."

I even enjoyed Aragorn's criticism of my last letter. It is intelligent and insightful and thus constructive debate, unlike the diatribe against science. The clever quip about my "rhetorical denouncement-as-political-practice," however, is more voodoo-argument. What does it

even mean, logically? *Nothing*. I did not accuse Aragorn of such when he rhetorically denounced anarcho-primitivism's acceptance of Natural Selection, because it as an empty accusation. Again, it is the improper claim that such-and-such is "not Anarchism" and therefore can be dismissed without debate—i.e., the negation of that which Aragorn cannot comprehend. This is proven by his entirely rhetorical response to my claim that Marxism and Anarchism are incompatible: "What is in a word?" In other "words," I made a cogent and consistent argument for my position, and he responded with legerdemain. Whether you call it "Marxism" or "Communism," or call its proponents "Leninists" or "Social-Democrats," my critique stands; to fall back on such pedantry is mere adolescent silliness.,

Your supertitle to my letter, "The Only Value is Science," totally misses the subtlety of my position, as did Aragorn. I fully agree with Aragorn's criticism of Scientism. I did not state or imply that I deem science to be a better or "more real" method of acquiring knowledge than any other method. I simply comprehend it, and therefore do not feel obligated to negate it. Affirmation is not apotheosis. Science is not, *per se*, Scientism, and this includes evolutionary biology and anthropology. I concede that most, practically all, scientists are scientific, but this

has no impact on my argument. Most "Anarchists" are actually Communists, but this fact does not suggest that Anarchism effectively *is* Communism.

I also fully agree with Aragorn that "Anarchist is a description of a set of goals," but again, this has no impact whatsoever on my statement that being "Red" is not and cannot be a subset of that set. Of course there are many approaches, by definition, to Anarchism—in fact, the number of approaches is technically infinite—but they are all *pluralistic* rather than *atomistic*. Aragorn should ask himself, rather than me, "What's in a name?" Anarchism, like a rose, by any other name, smells as sweet. Marxism, by any other name, however, smells as putrid. A "Red Anarchist" is, *by definition*, either not a real Red or not a real Anarchist, because the two concepts are incompatible, *by definition*. The policies of a "Red" require a state for implementation. Q.E.D.

And how could Aragorn declare, with a straight face, that the statement "the disciplines of anthropology and evolutionary biology are not anarchist" is not an opinion, but a fact? Must we go all the way back to Pontius Pilate and ask "What is truth?" In other words, what is a "fact"? Did he miss or fail to understand the distinction between analytical and synthetic statements? "Anthropology is not physics" is an analytical state-

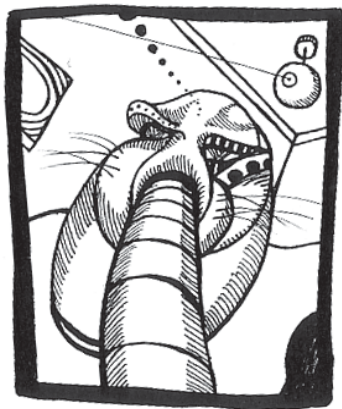
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ment—a fact. “Anthropology is not anarchistic” is a synthetic statement—it is an *opinion* until Aragorn provides *evidence* to support it. Simply put, it is not a negative tautology, *eo ipso*, it is not a fact. The assertion “black is not white” is self-evident; it requires no evidentiary (“synthetic”) demonstration. The assertion “the horse is not white” is not self-evident—you must *show me* the horse to demonstrate its veracity. Aragorn has shown us nothing but bald assertions. To *him* anthropology and evolutionary biology are not anarchistic; to *me* they are. Until he puts forth evidence that *by definition* these disciplines cannot have anarchistic implications, he is trying to pass off a subjective value-judgment as an objective fact.

I also agree with Aragorn’s contention that “political people are susceptible to leaving behind their critical faculties when it comes to Natural Law”—that is why I endorsed *sociobiology* rather than mere biology, and *structural* anthropology rather than mere anthropology; both fully incorporate the “critical faculties” of human animals into their studies, and thus, in my subjective value-judgment, are capable of extending anarchistic principles found in nature to the principles upon which societies are based.

There is a huge difference between affirmation and nega-

tion, which Aragorn and many others would be well-served to understand. When we embrace something it is possible to later learn that we were wrong about it and move on; when we dismiss something, on the other hand, that is effectively the end of inquiry; we cannot later learn that we were mistaken and correct our position. I have asserted not that we can count on scientists to aid the cause, only that the *knowledge* of science can be utilized, theoretically or practically, in furtherance of the cause. Collaterally, I have suggested that in doing so, some scientists *might* eventually come to sympathize with the ideal of anarchism. The former is eminently useful even if the latter never materializes. Aragorn has, over against this, essentially asserted that because no scientists presently sympathize with Anarchism officially, all of science is of no use to us. My assertions offer possibilities, his preclude them, and since mine come from *within* science and his come from *without*, my value-judgment has validity to some degree and his does not.

I do not suppose that Anarchists can *recoup* science, but we certainly can recoup some of its knowledge, insight, and power of persuasion. I merely wish to say, in this milieu, with Newton, that if I have seen farther than others, it is because I have stood upon the shoulders of giants; Aragorn can only imagine another giant to slay. Every person and every society in history has made declarations about human nature, implicitly when not explicitly, and so Aragorn’s claim that this cognitive exercise is uniquely “Western” is ridiculous. I agree, of course, with his claim that “Declarations about Human Nature say far more about the declarers...that they do about either humanity or nature”—indeed, this is the crux of

the argument. It is precisely because of my recognition of *projection* that I can see value-judgments where he sees “facts.”

I do not suggest that sociology and structural anthropology offer facts, but only that they project value-judgments. And my intimate familiarity with these has shown me anarchistic principles right under the eyes of scientists, unrecognized. Although I was not looking, in fact, these disciplines helped to reconnect me with the Anarchism of my upbringing, in college, on this basis. If I can *re-discover* Anarchism in science, then millions of others can *dis-cover* it there.

In his review of *Endgame*, Aragorn essentially pondered how it might be possible to find an unmediated relationship with the Earth—the answer to this potent question was implied in my last letter, and is explicit in this one: in sociobiology and structural anthropology, as in Anarchism—and *only* Anarchism—the *medium is the message* (McLuhan). I was raised an Anarcho-socialist and Pagan, but in early adulthood, partly rebelling against my (hippy) parents (I came of age in the 1980s), I drifted into Libertarianism and Atheism. But in college, specifically in science and philosophy, I found Nature, including human nature, pushing me toward Socialism and Agnosticism, and then back to Anarcho-socialism and Paganism (literally: Pantheism). Though this be madness, yet there is method in’t.

Peter Georgacarakos  
Federal Supermax  
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## Fighting over Nietzsche

My dear Mister Morris,

Your letter is exuberant and certainly greased with more “creative joy” than my frail body, despite my warrior ethic, could ever muster. The passion of your letter shines through in your momentum. There is not a moment to add a period, a dash, even a semi-colon to break up your run on sentences. My apologies for calling you and your ilk lifeless as you have put such gusto into your agitated reply.

Yet your spirit misses its mark. You attack not Nietzsche on his strength, on his convictions, but on the most gross assumptions about him. I do not doubt that you have read Nietzsche, but I do doubt you have understood him and his life. As can be shown by the dissonance between your current words and your previous statements.

Your allusions to his appealing to Hitler mock your own words in your advertised book in which you state “... many aspects of Nietzsche’s philosophy are incompatible with Fascism, he was critical of German Nationalism, was not anti-Semitic... (page78)” As we both know it was Nietzsche’s sister, not our good Friedrich, who spun his work to give it an appeal to the Nazi party and Hitler, she being an active proponent of the party.

Nietzsche’s dislike of the poor, of the working classes, of anarchists, socialists, and Christians was based on not only on the ideas they held but the type of people they were. Rather than create their own values the above defaulted onto a slavish morality. They are creatures of habit, or reaction, of following an unquestioned and previously created morality.

As for Nietzsche’s gallivant-

ing about Europe we might also look at your own words. "In 1879 he resigned his professorship at Basle on the grounds of ill health, and for the next decade, living on a small pension, he became something of an 'eternal fugitive,' as he described himself. He wandered around Europe, living an increasingly solitary and lonely life, looking for some place or climate that might ease his steadily deteriorating health (p.68)."

Nietzsche's strength for us is in his critique of morality, in his ideas of the will to power, in his desire for and encouragement of strong, self-overcoming individuals. If you would critique him on that your comments might find a better home.

Clayten James

### Corrections and Redirects

Dear *Anarchy*

My, how my "dreary" existence was brightened to discover that I had my own "tendency." (*Anarchy*, no. 65, p. 56) This came, I must admit, as a surprise to me but, still, it is nice to have my "dreary" life brightened by such news! Unfortunately, as I read the so-called review of *Black Flag* that spark of sunshine quickly flickered and died. Given its inaccuracies and contradictions, I can only surmise that this "tendency" of mine's is just as much nonsense as the rest of Lawrence's non-review.

I was amazed to discover that we had organised a "take-over" of our "erstwhile bitter rival *Freedom*." I'm not sure how we managed that, as no member of the *Black Flag* collective has become an editor of *Freedom*. If anything, it's the opposite as an editor of *Freedom* joined

our collective for the last issue. He kindly did the new layout Lawrence loved so much. Yes, people who are, or have been, members of our collective do write for *Freedom*, but they have had no control over whether it goes in and, as such, are treated exactly the same as other contributors (as it should be). I doubt that has changed, or will change.

Still, why commend increased co-operation in our movement when, instead, it can be used for a petty little dig at others?

Equally astonishing was the discovery that Andrew Flood is my "doppelganger." As we are physically unlike, I assume Lawrence means our politics. Yes, we are both communist-anarchists but Andrew is a (neo-)Platformist and I am not so there are important differences. I'm also not aware of Andrew ever being a contributor to *Freedom*, never mind the extremely regular one Lawrence thinks he is. Suffice to say, if Andrew has contributed to that paper he has done so so infrequently that I cannot remember him ever doing so. Perhaps he is, anonymously or under a pseudonym, but not being an editor I have no way of knowing – like Lawrence, unless he wants to add telepathy to his list of talents.

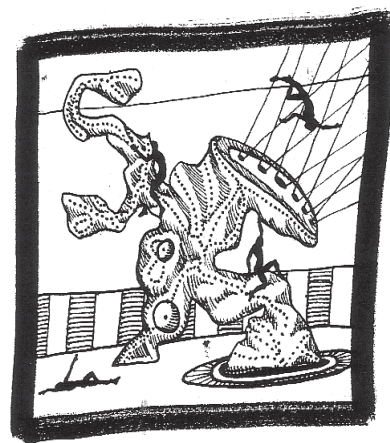
As for my contributions to *Freedom*, yes, a few years back I did write a significant amount that the editors did deem good enough for inclusion. These days, I write for it infrequently and get published most, but not all, of the time. So, apparently, others do not think my work is "stodgy". Perhaps I should be flattered that Lawrence thinks me so productive, but I refuse to take credit for the hard work of others.

I'm at a lost to see how myself and Andrew could have

"allotted" ourselves a "full third" of *Black Flag*, given that Andrew is not part of its editorial collective. And Lawrence even gets its size wrong – it is 40 pages (making 10 pages a "full" fourth). As for the 8 pages I contributed, the decision to include those rested with that collective. I do think it extremely insulting for Lawrence to suggest that the others had no input in the decisions we collectively reached. I would say an apology to them is in order, but I will not hold my breath waiting for it.

Channelling our editorial, Lawrence notes that 8 pages are by "two dead guys," Murray Bookchin and Maurice Brinton. Somewhat contradictory, he lambastes us for printing the works of a non-anarchist (Brinton) while ending his so-called review by stating "the nicest thing that can be said ... is that they did the Brinton reprint"! What is it to be? Why attack us for the reprints then admit that one is of interest? The nicest thing that can be said is that Lawrence is ignorant of the massive contribution that Brinton had in the post-war libertarian movement in Britain. Marking his death with a reprint of an article not included in his "For Workers' Power" collection made perfect sense. Or so we thought.

Then there is Bookchin. We thought that his decades of work as an anarchist contributed immensely to our movement and should be (critically) celebrated rather than ignored. And to correct another of Lawrence's many errors, Bookchin still considered himself an anarchist in 1998 when he wrote his article on the Communist Manifesto. He may have had private doubts over his "self-professed allegiance" but he openly broke with anarchism in 1999 (last



year I had thought it was later than that, but I have since discovered otherwise). The article itself shows none of the inaccuracies and pettiness towards anarchism his subsequent work was marred with. Moreover, given that as far as we knew, this article had never been published in Britain we thought that it would be of interest to our comrades, which it appears to have been. Which is the most important criterion, surely, rather than some ideological fetish over whether Bookchin considered himself an anarchist at the time it was written?

I feel that I have to end by saying that I resent having to waste my time writing this letter. The best which can be said of Lawrence's petty, vindictive and inaccurate non-review is that it will bolster sales as news that he dislikes *Black Flag* (or, more accurately, me and my writing) becomes better known. Although they hardly need help as this issue has sold remarkably well – suggesting that *Black Flag* does meet a need in the British movement.

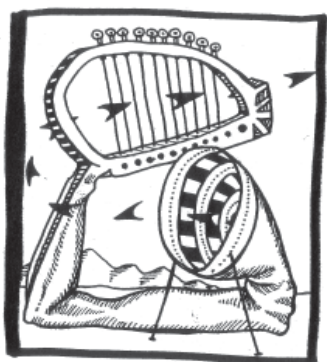
Iain McKay

*Lawrence responds:*

*I appreciate the corrections on various details McKay provides, and hereby express my regret for jumping to as many crazy conclusions as I did in my "non-review." There are a*

few things that need to be addressed, however, for which I do not need to apologize.

The tendency which McKay exemplifies is a form of sectarian early-20th century anarchism typified by an unchanging perspective (as if nothing of interest occurred in the class struggle in the last 80 years), whose partisans engage in bouts of excommunication/exclusion of a host of folks whose self-identification is also anar-



chist. In practice it means that any self-described anarchist who is skeptical about the identification of *The Working Class* (in factories and fields) as the Revolutionary Subject and who is skeptical about the possibility that the Anarchist Revolution will usher in an era of the full (self-managed) development of the Productive Forces has placed herself outside the pale of what McKay and his allies call “class struggle” or “communist” anarchism. They might be able to convince themselves that they are merely pointing out the heresy, and are not actually excommunicating anyone, but the vitriol McKay uses against non-orthodox anarchists is chillingly similar to the tone he uses when engaging in polemics with Marxists and other anti-anarchists. I confess that the few times I have read his

rants against Leninists, I have enjoyed much of them; but it really is annoying that his attacks on other anarchists contain that same level of animosity. For McKay the enemies of Anarchism are everywhere—inside and outside—and he makes no distinctions (fine or otherwise) between those who might actually be his comrades and allies and those who obviously are not. His hotheadedness gets the better of him in his intemperate (as usual) response to my “non-review” of his magazine.

What’s a review? How did mine of BF #226 not qualify as authentic for McKay? He doesn’t say, but I assume it’s because he doesn’t like what I said. My review of the latest BF (#227) in the media review section of this issue is largely positive, so shall I assume that McKay will consider it to be real? A review of a magazine or pamphlet—at least for publication in these pages—consists of at least a little critical engagement with the material, not just a summary of its contents.

Certainly “take over” was an unfair characterization of the dynamic between BF and Freedom—if we agree with McKay that what’s at stake are editorial decisions rather than the dearth of diverse writers. Is it “petty” to point out the resulting flattening of perspectives among the two most well-known British anarchist periodicals?

What exactly are the “important differences” between a non-Platformist and a Neo-Platformist? Since McKay brings it up, he should be able to enumerate at least one or two. Alas, we will only have to take his word for it, since

there is no discernable evidence of such differences in his letter or in any of the many essays, rants, blog posts, and angry letters from Flood and McKay—which is why I refer to Flood as McKay’s doppelganger. Even McKay is intelligent enough to know that’s what I meant. Minor organizational differences (whatever they might be) between communist-anarchists hardly qualify as “important.”

In terms of the number of pages allotted to Flood and McKay, I wrote in my (non-) review “ten out of thirty pages of content.” What does of content mean? It means writing; not graphics, not the front and back covers, not other miscellaneous material. As an editor I am fully aware that content decisions require that there is content to choose from. If McKay had eight pages worth of material at the time production decisions were made, and there was little else from other writers that was either good enough or relevant, then those eight pages got printed. This doesn’t mean that McKay’s stuff is that good—only that he wrote a lot of material and nobody else’s was any better (according to the criteria of the editorial collective). My apology is hereby extended to all the other editors at Black Flag for implying that the sheer volume of written material by McKay had any influence on how much of his material got printed.

Noting that there are reprints is not the same as attacking the decision to reprint them. If the material is good, why not reprint it? Recognizing the work of Brinton as relevant goes a long way toward lessening the sectarianism of other parts of

McKay’s project and his hair-pulling rants against anything he deems not anarchist. However, what might appear at first glance as an anti-sectarian overture (the Brinton reprint) may be, on closer inspection, merely acknowledging a recognizable similarity of tactics. This is not to say that there’s nothing anarchists can learn from the anti-Leninist Left, or vice versa. The recognition of a similarity of action and its location (*The Working Class* at the point of production) from non-anarchists doesn’t mitigate the ferocity of McKay’s pronouncements of what ideas and actions have no place within his Anarchism™.

Whether Bookchin considered himself an anarchist at the time he wrote on the Communist Manifesto (or when he wrote *Social Anarchism* or *Lifestyle Anarchism* or anything else) is of little interest to me. My irritation with Bookchin is that he painted himself into the proverbial corner, limiting his personal relevance to the expansion of anarchist practice and analysis through his intellectual dishonesty and frantic sectarian excommunications—eerily similar to McKay’s antics in these pages and elsewhere. My biggest problem with McKay is that not only can he not discern the difference between a negative review and an attack, or between me not liking his writing and not liking him as a person (how could I, since we’ve never met?), but he also can’t discern the difference between people who will never be allies versus those who are ultimately on the same side.

Do Do That Outdo  
That You Do So Well

Friends,

[...] A clarification on something published in the letters. Using the initials "J. S." for authorship of the poem "enemies" by John Sweet does a disservice to the readers, for he is a talented and approachable poet with much work to be read freely on the world wide web. Speaking of, my old domain was actually disproductionS.org, and if anyone would like to start a new project with it, please get in touch via phm@dore@riseup.net.

I think all the nit-picking about agriculture is less than constructive, that many would benefit from the research and work of folks like Daniel Quinn. I tend to find it a secondary question when one is honest about the state of our insurrectionary efforts.

While the spread of our ideas is a good method of keeping our own morale up, it has been my experience (read: Baltimore) that establishmentary anarchism tends to get lazy. Civilians don't take anarchists as seriously because they have difficulty respecting them. Or something. Whatever it is, direct action will be what gets us the real goods, and I think a serious mood enhancement is needed. If we could sustain whatever fuels the black blocs to take deliberate and honest action, at the same time as being in direct communication with our affected neighbors as to "Why?" perhaps insurrection wouldn't seem so impossible to either civilians or certain NE-FACKers I've spoken with.

I find two things about your reviews I don't like. One, you're not at all expanding beyond "anarchist" lit, which is a tiny fraction of alternative

media. Two, you and many other anarchists seem to miss CrimethInc.'s very nature.

Being that anyone is free, indeed encouraged, to produce CrimethInc. materials, of course some finer philosophical points are now and then contradicted. *Rolling Thunder* is indeed beautiful, but you seem deaf when we say, demand really, OUTDO US! Your own early-90's *National Geographick*-ish design leaves MUCH to be desired. Fonts could be more coherent, perhaps standardized; typographical errors could be greatly reduced; and the highlighting of passages really isn't attractive to this reader. Perhaps a full investigation and even a theft of what has made CrimethInc. so successful would help AJODA in untold ways.

I'm probably not the only young person who saw things ever-so-much clearer after I read *Days of War, Nights of Love*. If not for it I might have "grown out of it" once bored with all the leftist bullshit our particular philosophy seems inundated with.

And to Bob Black: please calm down and do something interesting. My faith in you could use some renewing.

P. H. Madore  
formerly of dispatch litareview,  
currently one more writer

*Aragorn! responds:*

*As you have stated – CrimethInc and AJODA are different projects. While you might think that more of a design orientation would improve our project I would say that having a more critical engagement, especially with their own rhetoric, would greatly improve CrimethInc's. The point is that there is more than enough room for each of our projects; instead of limply stating that your appreciation for one project means that there*

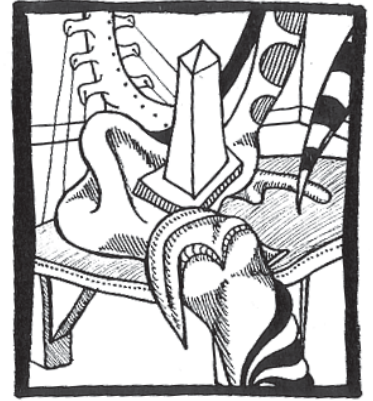
*a problem with another, let's investigate motivations. If boredom is your primary concern then flashy graphics and layout will be of more concern than the direct challenge against ideology and status. If longevity is my concern, then knowing the name of the person I am talking to, their history, their relationships, is more important than their font choice or pull-quote style.*

*Why do we primarily review the anti-authoritarian press? Because this is what we are interested in. There are plenty of places where anarchists focus on the alternative press or independent press, as there should be, just as Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed is a place for addressing the anarchist press. Are we consumers of non-anarchist media? Absolutely, and if you follow our blogs, forum, and other writing you will see that. However, AJODA is a project that takes anarchism and anarchists seriously. This means that we engage with anarchists critically, honestly. This honesty is important to us. While radical cheerleading, starry-eyed rants, and appeals to "do more" or "be more effective" can also be honest – they are not for us, not in this magazine, not with our experience.*

Chaos, Vandals, Cunts,  
& Bitches are Bad?

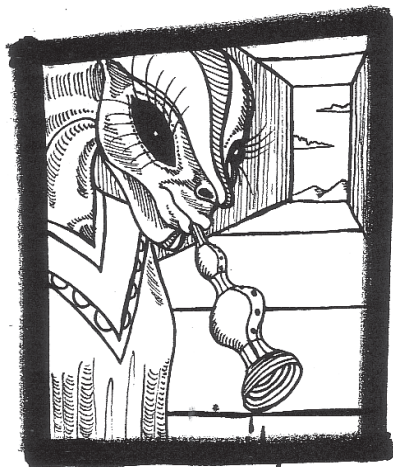
The Anarchist Myth:

Anarchy/anarchism is a joke. Anarchy is obviously unworkable, unsustainable, unrealistic, foolish, moronic, ridiculous, and absurd. Any person with common sense knows this. Anarchy is at best only a temporary relief from tyranny, to be inevitably replaced by a yet more brutal form of totalitarian control. Anarchy is chaos in the purely destructive, non-cre-



ative, sense. It is no wonder that self-proclaimed anarchists are finally showing their true colors, and openly showing their opposition to all civilization. Because to be opposed in principle to all government and law one must, in order to remain logically consistent, also be opposed to all civilization, since all civilization requires both law and government. Anarchism is hopeless. It is anti-human. Anarchism represents the apotheosis of materialism, nihilism, and existential despair: As such, it must know these things are true. Deep down you must know that you are play-acting the most absurd charade. Who are you kidding? Every day you must see countless refutations of the anarchist "ideals" as you call them. You are wasting time, effort, thought, emotion, passion, and even your very lives. Give it up. Are you just having a good laugh? I can't blame you for that. But I think it's about time you moved on. You need to wake up and smell the coffee. Order never arises out of chaos spontaneously: it must be imposed from above, either politically or metaphysically. Anarchy is social entropy. Anarchy is hell on earth. It is a living nightmare. Anarchy/anarchism refutes itself. Anarchy is unnatural. Intelligent, rational, logical, sentient biological species naturally group together to cooperate for survival and

mutual aid. In the process it becomes clear that tasks must be divided, organized, and deputized. As society becomes more complex (a completely natural process), it becomes clear that there is a need for rudimentary forms of law and government. You are seeking to swim against the tide of the Cosmos. There is no point. In case you haven't heard, Darwinism sucks ass. Anarchism is a hiccup in human thought. It is a disease of the mind. Some cunt ["PG"] writes in about Panarchists or



closet Marxists in the guise of anarchists, and goes on about priests being more sympathetic to social revolution. What an ignorant cunt/bitch. It's easy to find a Goddamn Judas Priest to uphold whatever banner you want. It proves nothing. Anarchists are self-deceived fools. Anarchism is idiocy. Anarchists are maggots growing out of the devil's shit. Anarchists are mindless vandals, since they can create nothing of true value. Anarchists are self-indulgent. Anarchists are perpetually on the rag.

METATRON

## Ah, The Invisibility...

Dear Sir,

People with wealth and privilege don't want to stop having them so they'll do everything in their power to hold on to things that serve their interests—including waging war.

We the working class are mere pawns who support them by voting and paying taxes, and serving in the military.

They need us to pay the bills and serve as consensus. Our true role is obvious.

It is only secondary that we are citizens with a few rights—which are being eroded by the Powers That Be—where will it all stop? How far down the line is too far?

Where is the bottom?

This is not my unique viewpoint—this is the way things are and have been.

I for one don't like it. I will take every opportunity to criticize a system that is corrupt.

Plutocrats do not represent real people. They only represent members of their own class: People With Big Bucks.

It is one big, extended Family.

If you are not "connected" you are out in the cold serving and paying the Freight.

Money is The Reality.

IDEOLOGY the Rationization and excuse.

"Come on, they really need your vote—How about that stimulous Pkg!" --hint, hint.

(Talk about buying votes!)

I don't know if I'm an Anarchist yet, but the more I see the closer I get!

Publish my name—it's all I own!

Sincerely,  
Rick Foreman  
Columbus OH

## Writers and Nurses, Yes; Verbose Jargon, No

Dear Sir:

I have seen your magazine on the stands in the past but never felt impelled to buy a copy of it until yesterday. I enjoyed the bit on 'writer's block', the article by the nurse on the present medical situation in the Us and the article on Anti-imperialism/anti-capitalism, since I have experienced a few things in the Philippines, etc. Most of the other articles and letters, etc. are very verbose, to say the least, and aside from that, filled with jargon that has the pretense of being written in modern, scientific, economic, etc. terms of English. Anyway, it was and is an interesting read. Keep up the good work.

HEJ

## Well Called

Dear AJODA:

Call: More transcendent truth in this brief feature than in, say, the entirety of the Negri/Hardt tome *Empire* currently gripping leftie/organizational outfits over here in the UK. A real treat to digest and ponder its analysis and ways out of the putrid cesspool fouling all that survives the continuing all-prevailing onslaught upon the human sensibility. Good work and keep it up! A blade of grass is a precious thing. Every blade of grass is a precious thing.

FD  
England

## More Concrete

Dear Anarchy,

Since a letter of mine "Eco-cide, Anarchy, and 'the Cosmic Séance'" that you published in *Anarchy* #64 (Fall/Winter 2007, p. 72), I have since come across a more concrete example of the cosmic séance which gives birth to state and civilization.

According to an eminent American anthropologist Bronislaw Kasper Malinowski's social anthropologist protégée Dr. Lucy Nair's *Primitive Government* (Penguin Books Ltd [1970], p. 217), the myths of contemporary East African Nilotic agriculturalists know as the Shilluk

"...tell how the Shilluk were led to the present country by Nyikang, a hero of partly divine [i.e., heavenly, godlike] ancestry, who brought with him the emblems of *kingship*... The Reth [shaman] is the living representative of Nyikang, and at the time of his installation the spirit of Nyikang is believed to enter into him; when this happens he trembles in the manner that indicates possession by a spirit and this is the moment at which he becomes *King*." (brackets and emphasis added)

In other words, divine kingship of the Shilluk (i.e., state and civilization) emerges from the Shilluk shaman when the "Great Spirit in the Sky" (i.e., the spirit of the founding father chief of the Shilluk) "enters into" the shaman,

Sincerely,  
DGP  
Arlington MA

Many Things  
But Not That One

To *AJODA*,

Bob Black may be many things, but a bully is not one of them (letters, *AJODA* #65).

Webster's defines a bully as "a person who hurts, frightens, or tyrannizes over those who are smaller or weaker". Even a cursory reading of Mr. Black's work will show he has consistently challenged the power-mongers, self-proclaimed experts, and vanguards who are accorded far too much deference by anarchists. Murray Bookchin, Ward Churchill, Noam Chomsky, AK Press, workerists, Radical Feminists, and identity politic fundamentalists of all types are hardly the weak and tyrannized of the anarchist (using that definition loosely) realm.

The truly sad thing is that Mr. Black needs to continue fighting this same battle (some would call it "speaking truth to power") over and over again.

To quote from his seminal essay "Feminism As Fascism," "Anti-authoritarians who would be revolutionaries confront many difficult questions. First, though, they should answer the easy ones correctly".

Bully for you, Bob!

DK  
Madison, WI

AK Press Bans *Anarchy*

Dear *Anarchy* Editors:

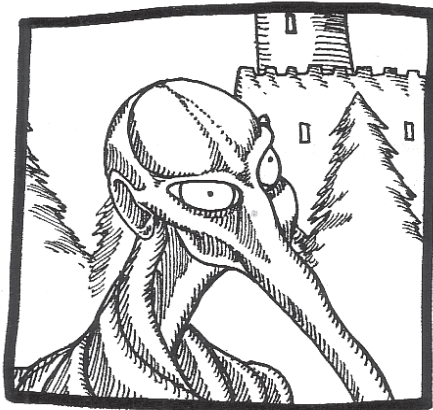
We are writing to inform you that AK Press will no longer be distributing *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed*.

In the interest of open discussion and political debate, we have chosen not to take this course of action in the past, despite *Anarchy's* repeated publication of one-sided, malicious, and demonstrably false statements about AK Press, our publications and authors, as well as individual collective members.

However, we feel that your publication of Bob Black's letter in issue #65 crosses a clear ethical and political line. Black's claim that AK Press is a tool of the state is the sort of absurdity we've come to expect from the pages of *Anarchy*—and, as such, is not something we'll bother responding to. But the personal attack on former AK Press collective member Ramsey Kanaan is not only unfounded character assassination; it also runs the risk of putting Ramsey and others in the anarchist movement in a potentially dangerous situation. Furthermore, these statements only encourage and perpetuate the paranoia and divisiveness that are a continuing detriment to any work being done by and within the anarchist community.

We've distributed *Anarchy* for over a decade now, even though we've had many political disagreements with its contents over the years. In light of this most recent issue, however, we feel it's time to end the relationship. With this latest editorial decision, one that could place individuals and entire communities in jeopardy, it seems you have jettisoned every last vestige of anarchist morality.

Sincerely,  
The AK Press Collective



*Anarchy*  
Held Hostage

To the Editors:

I am one of the writers whose pieces in the ill-fated *Anarchy* #65, along with the offending letter to the editor by Bob Black, have been the object of an attempted suppression by Ramsey Kanaan, petit-bourgeois publishing magnate and patriarch of AK Press, and his faction of commercial leftist opportunists. As I see it, Mr. Black's crime against Mr. Kanaan was to ask why (unlike Sebastian Horsely) he had been allowed into the U.S. despite his putative anarchism. For this exposure to possible danger in the unlikely event Mr. Kanaan were to be proved a real anarchist, the entirety of *Anarchy*, no doubt as acceptable collateral damage, has been made to pay.

It will surprise no one therefore, that I should roundly condemn this attempt by AK and its partisans, either in withholding distribution of the magazine through AK channels - said to carry some 60 copies - or by enacting a ban on the issue at bookstores such as the San Francisco-based Bound Together Books, to hold *Anarchy* hostage.

This incident is but one of a growing number of contradictions behind the facade of what purports to be, broadly, the 'anarchist community' in the San Francisco Bay Area, as manifested in bookfairs, information networks and the like. These contradictions have now in some aspects ripened to the point where one can begin to compare them - minus the lethality - to the low-intensity conflict

that prevailed within the Spanish anarchist movement on the eve of May 1937. At that point *El Amigo del Pueblo*, the newspaper of the Friends of Durruti, the most radical tendency in the anarchist milieu and the one most intent on carrying the revolution forward, was obliged to go to print with black bars obscuring the passages that had offended the Spanish Republican government, with which the main official anarchist organizations (CNT-FAI) were foolishly and self-destructively collaborating. In the end, the Friends of Durruti were denied the use of the CNT presses, just as *Anarchy* has now been denied the AK distribution network, and perhaps, a number of sales venues. Mr. Black may not have proved, nor do I think it was his intention, despite his provocative insinuations, that Ramsey Kanaan is some kind of federal agent, but Mr. Kanaan has, through his own reaction, proven that he is a no more than a little (unofficial) cop whose miniscule portion of power has already left him thoroughly corrupted.

This instance of attempted suppression of a publication is further evidence of a rot that has spread to virtually every sector of recent anarchist activity

here, being most notably public externally in the displacement of the anarchists and their message from what was traditionally their own premier anniversary/holiday, now 'reclaimed' as a stalino-reformist May Day Without Class-Consciousness, and internally, in the market-driven bookfairs, formerly an expression of an ill-defined but nonetheless real solidarity and now an expression of whether or not the participants have enough money up front to invest in a space, community – and whatever needs it may have – be damned. And these spaces themselves, more and more, are the domain of has-been-radical careerist phonies or leftists like AK, for whom "anarchy" is but a fashionable address, and who, behind their increasingly irrelevant anarchist, situationist and libertarian socialist ideological pretensions, are skills for everything from candidates of the Democratic Party to front groups of the Maoist "Revolutionary Communist Party." The real antiauthoritarian anticapitalists are now obliged to occupy the margins outside these events, expelled, in effect, from what used to be their own camp.

Against such a backdrop of degeneration, it is time to forcibly reassert the core values that define those of us, old guard unrepentants and young guns alike, who aim at the revolutionary destruction of authority and capital, and the institutions and relationships – wherever

they may be found – that underpin them. The censorship of our ideas and our physical displacement to the edges of what has become a grotesque commercial-bureaucratic simulacrum of a former radicalism, leached of substance by the flow of capital and the influence of the hierarchies that this capital has helped to create, constitute *acts of war* against us. If we are to take ourselves and our ideas seriously, it means taking seriously these wartime conditions that have been thrust upon us as well. Either we retreat – and where is the safe haven left to us in this increasingly colonized world of which our former comrades are now a part? – or we learn how properly to make war ourselves and advance.

It is at least somewhat heartening to learn that, in the form of the "Little Black Cart," steps are being taken to develop an alternative network of distribution that does not have to suffer further indignities at the hands of oversensitive petty-capitalist vermin intent on proving their institutional power. But there is much more that remains to be done if the tide is to turn. It is this writer's hope that in this he will do his part.

Burt Green

## Declaring War

Dear *AJODA*,

It's pretty rich of AK to complain about Bob Black's 'dirty tactics' in your last issue when they use dirty tactics all the time of precisely the type *AJODA* is now being subjected to.

Whispering campaigns, non-distribution and abuse of influence. They rely on the "warm fuzzy glow" of "Hey, aren't we all anarchists together?" (except, of course, those they consider as 'non-anarchists' non-attributably) to sell to an unquestioning 'soft-core' of 'joiners and followers' and plead 'security issues' when any hint of the reality of how they operate reaches the public domain.

It's also pretty obvious that AK see *AJODA* as ideological competition and would have jumped on any 'issue' sufficient to whip up their hero into trying to eliminate it. Your answer—now a necessity—is to develop your own independent distribution network and for readers to help, either finding outlets or donations. There really is no point in trying to be reasonable or accommodating with AK now—they've declared war in their usual cowardly, sneaky way, and you may as well now tell the truth about them as long and loud as you need to. AK is a commercial monopoly—and one using obviously sharp practises at that, even for capitalism—so the sooner people break free of that monopoly, the sooner their undeserved, clandestine, retarding influence will be broken.

My best wishes, and best of luck to you—you'll certainly need it.

Yours, for the destruction of civilization,

John Connor, formerly  
*Green Anarchist* (UK)

